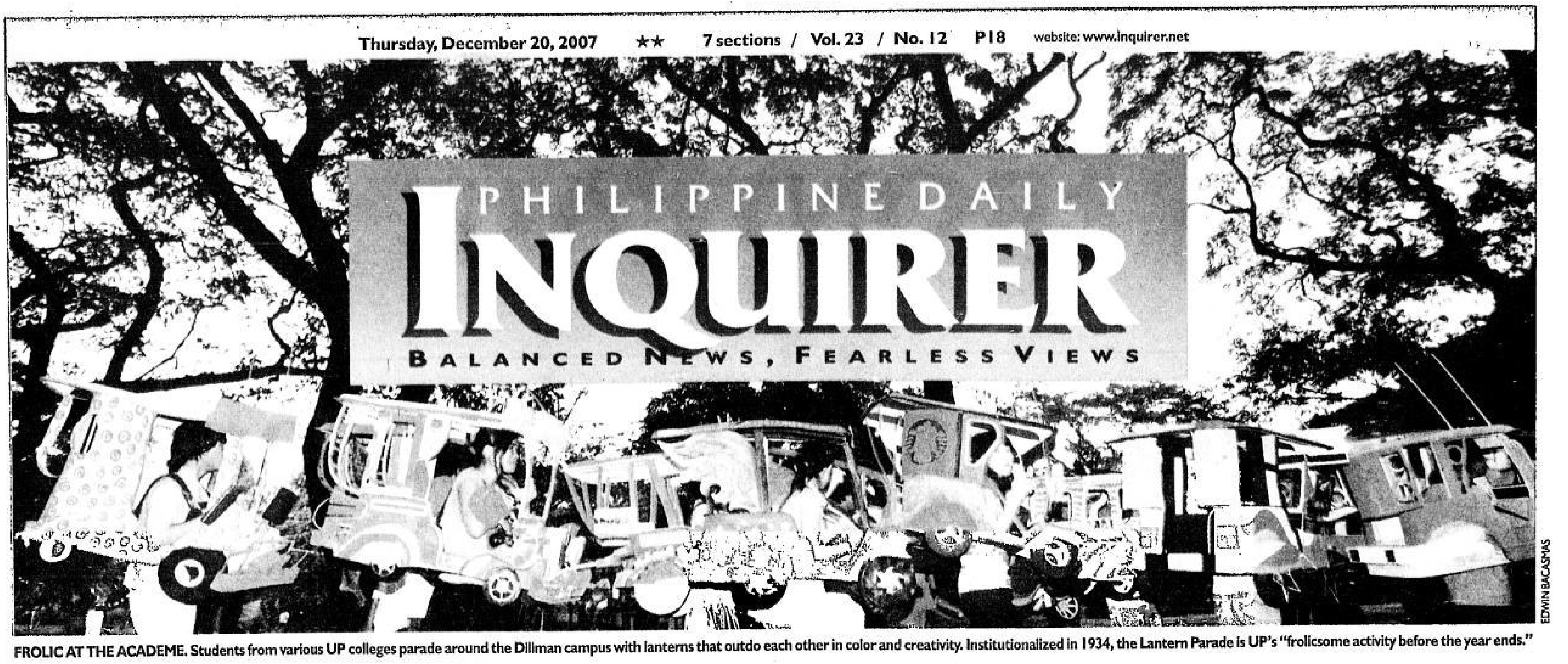
Thursday, December 20, 2007 ★★ 7 sections / Vol. 23 / No. 12 P18 website: www.inquirer.net


PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

FROLIC AT THE ACADEME. Students from various UP colleges parade around the Diliman campus with lanterns that outdo each other in color and creativity. Institutionalized in 1934, the Lantern Parade is UP's "frolicsome activity before the year ends." EDWIN BACASMAS

GMA's ₱30-B 'pork' hit

Deadlock looms on nat'l budget

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

WITH JUST TWO DAYS BEfore Congress goes on a Christmas break, the 2008 budget could be headed for a deadlock as administration and opposition lawmakers on the bicameral committee lock horns on the estimated P30 billion in "pork barrel" of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson said the budget allocations that offer the President "much elbow room" in determining the amount and the beneficiary without the mandatory audit rules could be the "killer provision" in the proposed P1.227-trillion General Appropriations Act of 2008.

"I think this is where all the argument in the bicameral meeting will narrow down to—'Is the President willing to cut down her funds at her disposal and lock in these funds in social services like health and education?'"

GMA'S P30-B/ A8

It ain't over yet, farmers warned

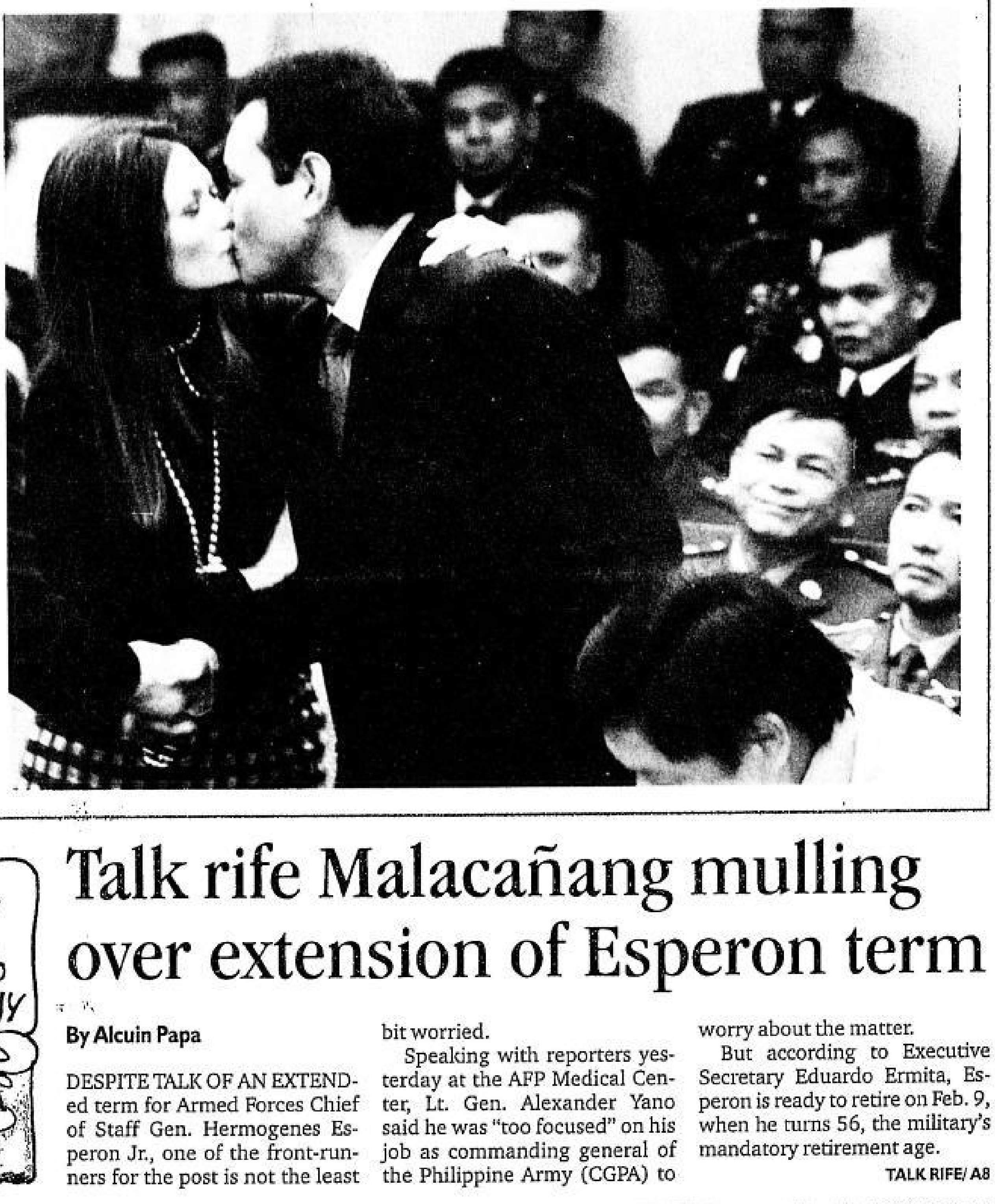
By Norman Bordadora, Michael Lim Ubac and Jerome Aning

THE DISPUTED LAND IN SUMILao, Bukidnon, may still slip beyond the grasp of the farmer-claimants because of the political alliance between President Macapagal-Arroyo and San Miguel Corp. chair Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco.

This was the warning aired yesterday by Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo in the wake of Ms Arroyo's executive order authorizing the reclassification of the 144-hectare property from agro-industrial to agricultural and its reversion to coverage of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP).

In a statement, Ocampo said the "political collusion" be-

IT AIN'T OVER/ A6



SEALED WITH A KISS

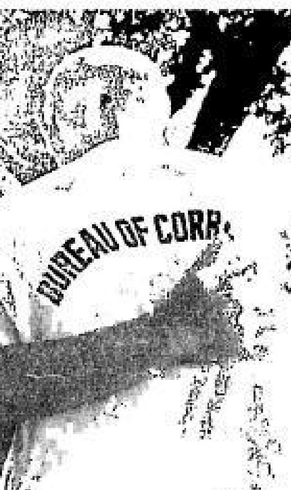
While a gallery of military officers grin in approval, Rep. Monica Prieto-Teodoro locks lips with husband Defense Secretary Gilberto C. Teodoro Jr. after his appointment was confirmed at the Senate on Wednesday. Teodoro was confirmed together with DSWD Secretary Esperanza Cabral and Trade Secretary Peter Favila. Nine others were bypassed. *(Story on Page A4.)* ROGER MARGALLO

Pampanga Gov Ed still awaits receipt

By Tonette Orejas
Inquirer Central Luzon

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—IF THE controversial P500,000 cash gift given to Pampanga Gov. Eddie Panlilio at Malacañang on Oct. 11 really came from the League of Provinces of the Philippines

PAMPANGA/ A8


BAKA MAMUTI ANG MGA MATA MO KAHIHINTAY

Talk rife Malacañang mulling over extension of Esperon term

By Alcuin Papa

DESPITE TALK OF AN EXTENDed term for Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr., one of the front-runners for the post is not the least bit worried.

Speaking with reporters yesterday at the AFP Medical Center, Lt. Gen. Alexander Yano said he was "too focused" on his job as commanding general of the Philippine Army (CGPA) to worry about the matter.

But according to Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, Esperon is ready to retire on Feb. 9, when he turns 56, the military's mandatory retirement age.

TALK RIFE/ A8

236 lawmakers receive P200,000 bonus each

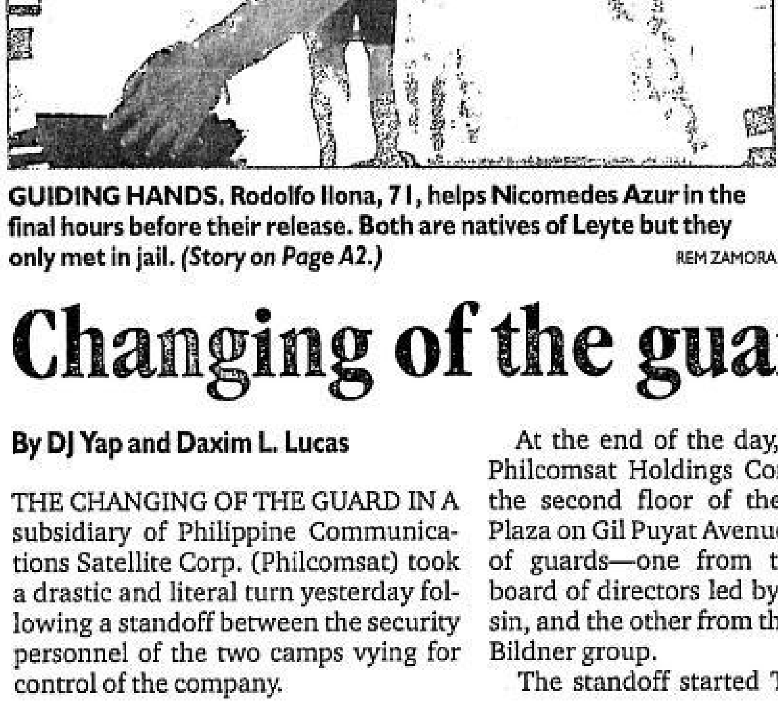
By Christian Esguerra and Norman Bordadora

CONGRESSMEN WILL HAVE THEIR pockets full when they go on their holiday break starting Saturday.

Each of the 236 lawmakers gets up to P200,000 every Christmas for staff bonuses, said Misamis Occidental Rep. Herminia Ramiro and Camiguin Rep. Pedro Romualdo, chair and vice chair, respectively, of the House committee on accounts.

This is to approximate the P10,000 given as Christmas bonuses to all national government employees and to

236 LAWMAKERS/ A8



GUIDING HANDS. Rodolfo Ilona, 71, helps Nicomedes Azur in the final hours before their release. Both are natives of Leyte but they only met in jail. *(Story on Page A2.)* REM ZAMORA

Santiago wake: Drama at Forbes Park unfolding

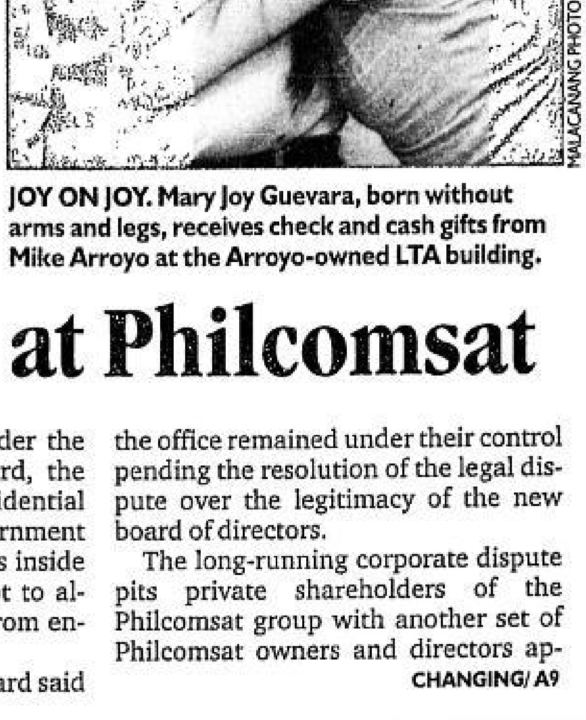
By Thelma San Juan

AS LIFESTYLE ICON ERNEST SANTIAGO lies in a chapel at Santuario de San Antonio in Makati City, a full-scale drama surrounding his death continues to unfold.

It's a plot whose twists and turns and cast of characters Santiago himself, who was known for theatrical flourish, would have found riveting.

Tuesday night, on the second day of the wake for Santiago who was found dead early Sunday morning in his Pagsanjan home, the Santuario chapel was astir with news that police were coming to arrest two suspects who were right there at the wake.

SANTIAGO/ A6



JOY ON JOY. Mary Joy Guevara, born without arms and legs, receives check and cash gifts from Mike Arroyo at the Arroyo-owned LTA building. MALACAÑANG PHOTO

Fa la la la: Long Christmas, New Year holidays

A FOUR-DAY CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY and a four-day New Year holiday await employees in the government and private sector.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita yesterday said the long Christmas holiday would start on Dec. 22 (Saturday) and end on Tuesday (Dec. 25).

Dec. 23 (Sunday) is a regular nonworking day while Dec. 24 (Monday) has been declared a special nonworking day under Presidential Proclamation No. 1211. Christmas Day is a regular holiday.

FA LA LA LA/ A9

Changing of the guard and guards at Philcomsat

By DJ Yap and Daxim L. Lucas

THE CHANGING OF THE GUARD IN A subsidiary of Philippine Communications Satellite Corp. (Philcomsat) took a drastic and literal turn yesterday following a standoff between the security personnel of the two camps vying for control of the company.

At the end of the day, the office of Philcomsat Holdings Corp. (PHC) on the second floor of the Pacific Star Plaza on Gil Puyat Avenue had two sets of guards—one from the "original" board of directors led by Enrique Locsin, and the other from the rival Africa-Bildner group.

The standoff started Tuesday night when four security guards under the employ of the Locsin-led board, the group supported by the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG), barricaded themselves inside the office with instructions not to allow the Africa-Bildner group from entering and setting up shop.

Lawyers of the Locsin-led board said the office remained under their control pending the resolution of the legal dispute over the legitimacy of the new board of directors.

The long-running corporate dispute pits private shareholders of the Philcomsat group with another set of Philcomsat owners and directors ap-

CHANGING/ A9

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Visayas and Northeasthern Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy to at times cloudy with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms.

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	**Iloilo/Bacolod**	Mostly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	**Roxas**	Mostly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	**Cebu**	Mostly Cloudy
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	**Tacloban**	Mostly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	**Gen. Santos**	Mostly Cloudy
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	**Zamboanga**	Mostly Cloudy
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	**Cagayan de Oro**	Mostly Cloudy
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	**Davao**	Mostly Cloudy

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64 elderly inmates pardoned

But executive clemency does not include Jalosjos, says Palace

By Julie M. Aurelio

SIXTY-FOUR ELDERLY INMATES became free men again yesterday after being granted a full pardon by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye broke the good news to around 40 of the pardoned inmates at the New Bilibid Prisons in Muntinlupa yesterday.

"By virtue of the law, all of you are now granted full pardon and are free men again," Bunye said to applause from the pardoned prisoners.

The executive clemency also covered inmates in other penal institutions who had been recommended for pardon.

Convicted rapist Romeo Jalosjos, however, was not in the list of pardoned or paroled prisoners. *(See related story.)*

Bunye explained that the primary consideration in granting a pardon was an inmate's advanced age. Jalosjos is only 67 years old.

In ordering the release of the elderly prisoners, the President said this was because "prisoners are people" too.

"They deserve as much compassion, if not more humane treatment, as those living in a free society," she said in a statement.

"The President is hopeful that society will welcome them back and give them a second chance to live their lives as useful citizens," said Bunye.

Bunye visited the national penitentiary and shook hands with all the inmates gathered at the NBP's social hall. All of the elderly prisoners had greying hair and were able to walk only with the aid of a cane or a fellow prisoner.

With the 64 granted pardon yesterday, the number of prisoners granted full, executive clemency by the President this year totaled 258 convicts, said Bunye. The President commuted the sentences of 173 others, he said.

Another 48 were granted a pardon because of serious illness, while 73 were recommended by the Board of Pardons and Parole, he said.

Aside from the 64 inmates who were given pardon yesterday, Bunye said 10 other cases are being processed and "may be decided on or before Christmas."

Of the 258 pardoned inmates, Bunye said 137 were granted clemency because they had reached the age of 70.

There were 227 male convicts and 21 female prisoners out of the 258 inmates pardoned this year. Of the 173 convicts whose sentences were commuted, 165 were male.

Among the pardoned convicts was a Japanese national, Yokitoshi Matsushita, 71, who was convicted of rape.

Bunye said four of the pardoned prisoners were 80 years and over—Tereso Ngujo, Rebecca Cabrales, Timoteo de Asis and Celestino Gardon. Another convict, Rodolfo Pante, is already 91 years old.

"We also submitted for the President's consideration an additional 12 convicts for the commutation of their sentence in time for the Christmas season," he added.

Anastacio Justo, 74, sat quietly in his wheelchair as Bunye read out the President's executive clemency order.

"My relatives are waiting for me," he said, his eyes blank and unmoving.

Dominador Tagulao, 71, lamented the fact that none of his eight children had visited him since 2004.

"I do not know where to find them. I will go home to Antipolo, to see if they will accept me again," he told the INQUIRER in Filipino. *With a report from Christine Avendaño*

WHAT'S INSIDE

NETWORK WAR heats up over ABS-CBN report /A7

3 CABINET members confirmed; 9 bypassed /A4

Truce stays, says Palace

THE UNILATERAL THREE-WEEK CHRISTmas ceasefire earlier declared by the government will stay despite the deadly attack staged by communist rebels in Palawan where three Marine soldiers were killed, Malacañang said yesterday.

"The suspension of military operations (against the New People's Army) continues from Dec. 16 to Jan. 6 notwithstanding the incident in Palawan," Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said.

But Ermita said that police and soldiers have been told to be careful and be on the alert against possible attacks by NPA rebels.

Ermita made the statement a day after President Arroyo sought a review of the unilateral truce following last weekend's attack on Marine soldiers in Palawan.

The executive secretary said the ceasefire stays, stressing that the government does not engage in "knee-jerk reactions."

Christine O. Avendaño

Prison execs probed over TV interview

BUREAU OF CORRECTION OFFICIALS will be investigated after convicted child rapist Romeo Jalosjos was interviewed over ABS-CBN television yesterday, only a day after Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez issued an order banning media interviews with inmates without his permission.

The directive to the Bucor was prompted by an earlier press interview in which Jalosjos insisted that he was already a free man following President Macapagal-Arroyo's commutation of his sentence and the Bureau of Prisons' order releasing him last Dec. 16. Malacañang clarified that the 67-year-old Jalosjos was not to be released until he was 70.

According to Gonzalez, he had "scolded" Bucor director Ricardo Dapat over the early morning interview with Jalosjos in which the former congressman insisted that he was no longer a prisoner.

He said the Bucor officials who violated his order were under investigation.

Gonzalez also disputed Jalosjos' insistence that he was not a prisoner because the order releasing him had not been revoked.

"That release order has never been released, so there's nothing to revoke. What he has is a xerox copy of the release order," Gonzalez said.

Jalosjos was convicted in 1997 for statutory rape and sentenced to two life terms. His victim was an 11-year-old girl. Last April the President commuted his sentence to 16 years. *Leila B. Salaverria*

Senate OKs UP charter

THE SENATE YESTERDAY ratified a new charter for the University of the Philippines but not before Sen. Jamby Madrigal and UP president Emerlinda Roman exchanged heated words that briefly disrupted the deliberations Tuesday night.

Senate majority leader Francis Pangilinan said that with the ratification of the UP Charter Act, UP would be able to boost its income through the use of its resources and assets.

Pangilinan reported that the charter was ratified after the 10 amendments introduced by Madrigal were agreed upon by the Senate with minor modifications.

Madrigal and Roman and their respective aides had accused each other of arrogance and bad manners. Madrigal accused Roman in a speech of being intolerant with those who disagree with them and of being against transparency.

Pangilinan took up the cudgels for the UP officials and took the floor and said: "I respect the views raised by Senator Madrigal. I disagree with the number of points that she raised with respect to the attitude of the UP officials."

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Now, Atong Ang wants to go to US

REBUFFED TWICE BEFORE, BUSINESSMAN Charlie "Atong" Ang has asked the Sandiganbayan anew to allow him to travel to the United States to attend his daughter's wedding.

He asked the antigraft court to grant him a 25-day travel permit to Las Vegas, Nevada beginning Jan. 5 so he could attend the wedding of his daughter, Joaneivee, on Jan. 19.

In a motion filed early this week, Ang invoked the Filipino tradition that parents had to be at their children's side on such special occasions.

Ang, a coaccused of former President Joseph Estrada in a plunder case, was convicted of a lesser offense of corruption of public official, and was sentenced to six years. He was later placed under probation until 2009.

Ang had filed two requests to travel to Cambodia to work there as a consultant for a gaming firm, but these were denied by the antigraft court, which ruled that curtailment of travel is an essential part of probation.

FONTANA

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Fontana Leisure Parks

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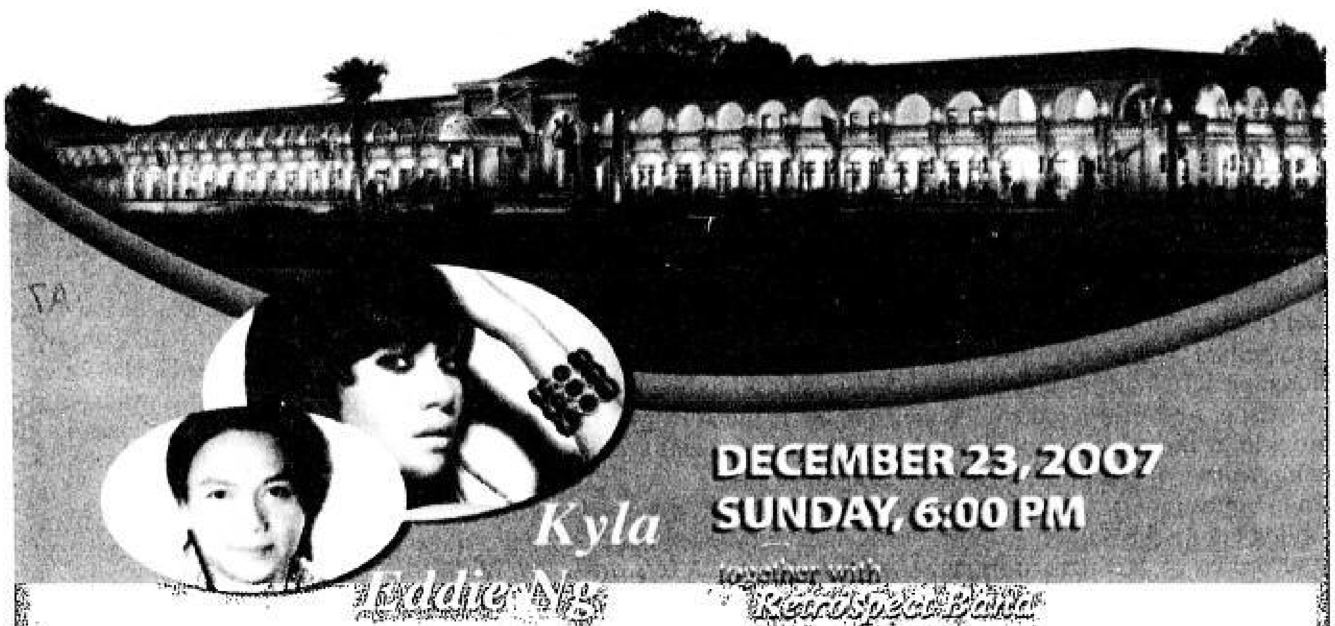
全新豪華會所娛樂場試業



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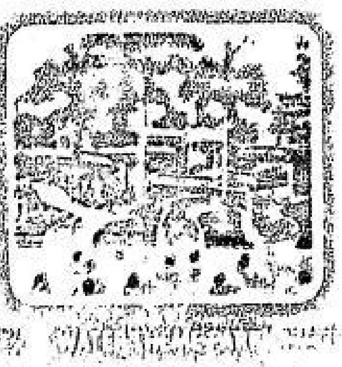

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Bulacan

NOCHE BUENA PACKAGE
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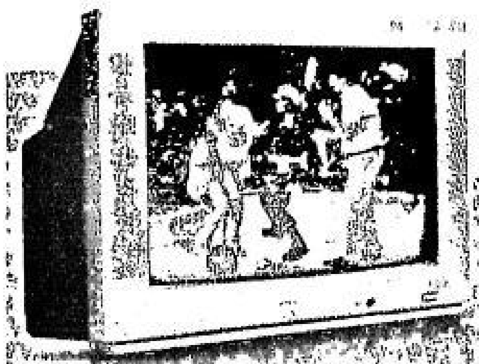

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THE DAILY GOSPEL

Thursday, December 20, 2007
3rd Week of Advent

1st Reading: Is 7:10-14
Gospel: Luke 1:26-38

In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth. He was sent to a young virgin who was betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the family of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

The angel came to her and said, "Rejoice full of grace, the Lord is with you." Mary was troubled at these words, wondering what this greeting could mean.

But the angel said, "Do not fear, Mary, for God has looked kindly on you. You shall conceive and bear a son and you shall call him Jesus." He will be great and shall rightly be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the kingdom of David, his ancestor; he will rule over the people of Jacob forever and his reign shall have no end.

Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be if I am a virgin?" And the angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, the holy child to be born shall be called Son of God. Even your relative Elizabeth is expecting a son in her old age, although she was unable to have a child, and she is now in her sixth month. With God nothing is impossible."

Then Mary said, "I am the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me as you have said." And the angel left her.

Commentary

Now it is time for the announcement/birth of Jesus to follow the pattern. First the words of the prophet intended for Ahab, the King in Israel who did not want God interfering with his reign. But Isaiah says that God is king in Israel and there will be a sign: a child will be conceived who will be Emmanuel—God with us—for the people of Israel. And a child was born of a young woman in his time. And the angel comes to Mary, as he did to Zechariah, and she questions how. But she is not struck dumb. This is the beginning of the new—the new covenant and testament, the new creation, the Incarnation of God into human history—and all will be changed indelibly forever. The reading is more about who this child will be—birth announcement—rather than about Mary who will bear him into the world. He is to be named Jesus/Joshua. He will be great before God and he will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God is his father and David the King, long dead, is his father too and the kingdom belongs to him forever. And he will rule. He is born of the Father and the Spirit in Mary, and in everyone of us if we obey and accept this Word into our hearts and bodies. Nothing is impossible with God—God is to be born in us as surely as he was born in Mary. This is Christmas—not the past—but now. Are we saying, "Be it done unto me according to God's word?"

CHRISTMAS SMILES
The family of policewoman Leah Rose Cambri, who is expecting another child, is a picture of anticipation as they await the start of yesterday's Christmas gift-giving by President Macapagal-Arroyo for selected police families. The occasion was the inauguration of the Pulis-Kalinga quartering complex for police personnel in Camp Bagong Diwa, Bicutan, Taguig City.
LYN RILLON

SC rebuffs Subic car importers

By Leila B. Salaverria

THE SUPREME COURT HAS JUNKED the bid of importers of second-hand vehicles to allow the Olongapo Regional Trial Court to continue hearing their petition to nullify a Bureau of Internal Revenue circular levying taxes on cars imported through the Subic Free Port Zone but sold at public auction.

The high court upheld the Court of Appeals ruling that the Olongapo RTC has no jurisdiction over the case filed by the Asia International Auctioneers Inc. and Subic Bay Motors Corp.

The two firms had contested the BIR's Revenue Memorandum Circular that levied taxes on vehicles sold at public auction within the Subic Special Economic Zone.

They asked the Olongapo RTC to nullify the BIR circular for being unconstitutional.

While the case was pending, the RTC issued a writ of preliminary injunction to stop the implementation of the said circular.

Then BIR commissioner Guillermo Parayno, other BIR Officials and the Office of the Solicitor General then elevated the case to the Court of Appeals, questioning the lower court's jurisdiction.

The appellate court then ruled that the Olongapo RTC had no jurisdiction over the issue, and dismissed the civil case brought by the vehicle importers.

Asia International and Subic Bay Motors then questioned the appellate court ruling before the Supreme Court.

But according to the high court, the Court of Tax Appeals and not the RTC has jurisdiction over issues concerning the BIR's decisions in cases involving disputed assessments, as well as matters that arise from the National Internal Revenue Code and/or other laws administered by the BIR.

The court also said that Asia International and Subic Bay Motors failed to ask the BIR to reconsider its issuances before taking the issue to the courts. Hence, their petition should be dismissed, it added.

"It is settled that the premature invocation of the court's intervention is fatal to one's cause of action. If a remedy within the administrative machinery can still be resorted to by giving the administrative officer every opportunity to decide on a matter that comes within his jurisdiction, then such remedy must first be exhausted before the court's power of judicial remedy can be sought," it said.

The high court also said the BIR and the Office of the Solicitor General could also contest the RTC's order before the Court of Appeals even without filing a motion for reconsideration on the RTC's issuance, contrary to what the vehicle importers argued.

It said the issue of jurisdiction, or whether the court has power and authority to decide on a case, could be raised any time during the proceedings.

"In fact, courts may take cognizance of the issue even if not raised by the parties themselves. There is thus no reason to preclude the CA from ruling on this issue even if allegedly, the same has not yet been resolved by the trial court," it said.

3 Cabinet members confirmed; 9 bypassed

By Dona Pazzibugan

NINE CABINET OFFICIALS HAVE been bypassed for confirmation by the congressional Commission on Appointments this year, even as the bicameral body gave the nod to three other Cabinet appointees.

Trade Secretary Peter Favila, Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro, Social Welfare Secretary Esperanza Cabral were confirmed by the CA plenary yesterday without any objections being posed against them.

Those whose appointments were not acted on were Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez, Energy Secretary Angelo Reyes, Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno, Finance Secretary Margarito Teves, Health Secretary Francisco Duque;

Public Works Secretary Hermogenes Ebdane, Environment Secretary Jose "Lito" Atienza, Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya Jr. and Agrarian Reform Secretary Nasser Pangandaman.

Yesterday's plenary session was the CA's last for the year, so the bypassed appointments and other pending nominations will have to wait until next year to be heard.

Also confirmed yesterday were the appointments of one Judicial and Bar Council member, eight ambassadors and consuls and 86 military officers.

Senate President Manuel Villar blamed Malacañang for the failure of the nine Cabinet secretaries' failure to get the commission's nod.

"We're not blaming all of those Cabinet members but the President should realize that the delay in the confirmation of her Cabinet members is caused by the refusal of some to cooperate with Senate and the House of Representatives," said Villar in Filipino, adding that some of them have not submitted the required documents.

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Cheap meds bill not enough – NGO

By Beverly T. Natividad

A NON-GOVERNMENT HEALTH ALliance said yesterday the passage of the cheaper medicines bill by the House of Representatives was a step in the right direction but it fell short of providing a long-term solution to the problem of expensive drugs.

Kilosbayan Para Sa Kalusugan (KPSK), an alliance of about 20 health organizations, said "only the nationalization of our drug industry can resolve the problem and ensure low medicine prices in the long-term."

Dr. Merry Mia, KPSK spokesperson, said in an interview that while they think the passing of the bill points in a positive direction toward providing cheaper medicines for Filipinos, they doubt if it will keep medicine prices low for the long.

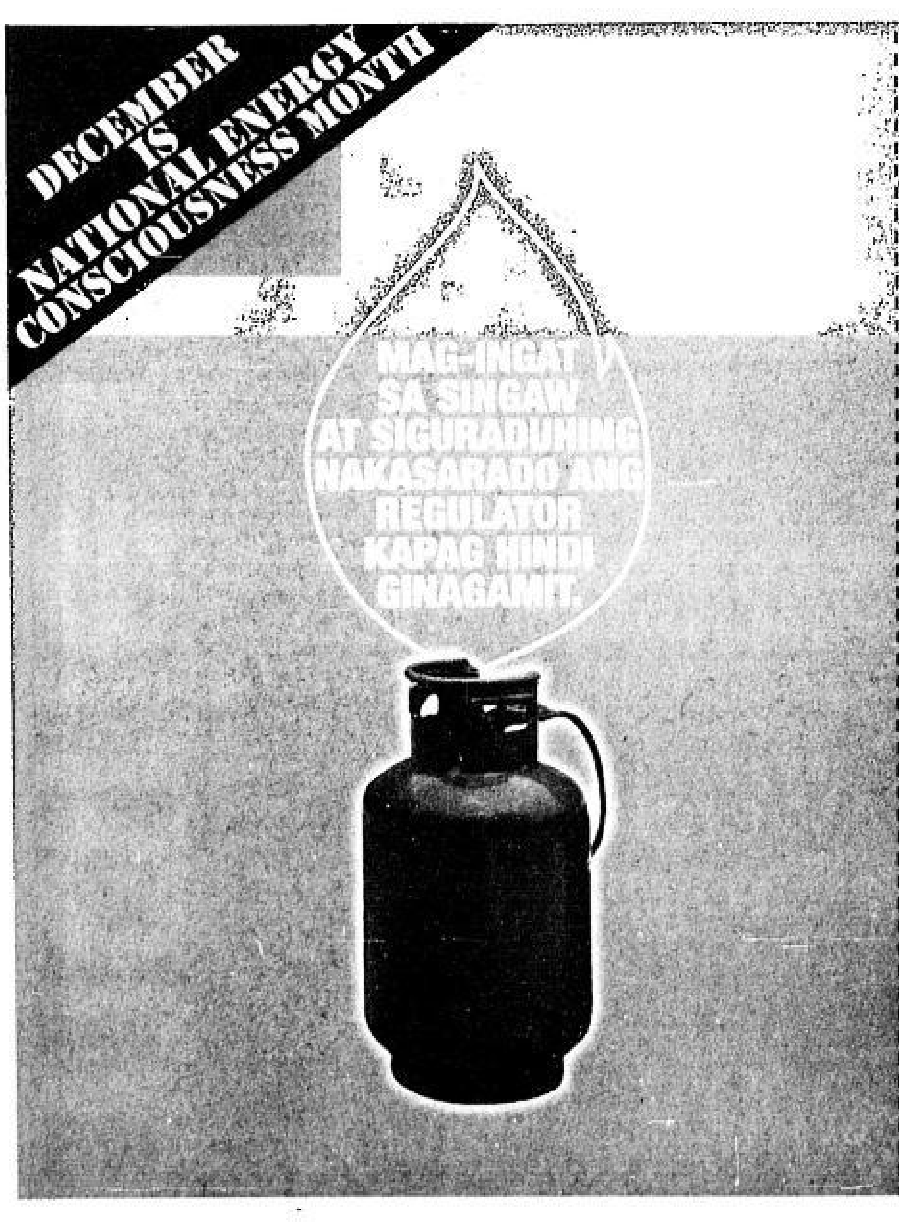
Congress passed on Tuesday House Bill 2844 or the cheaper medicines bill, which relaxes the intellectual property code on medicines by allowing parallel importation of patented medicines and creating a mechanism for price controls. The bill will be consolidated with a related bill in the Senate in a bicameral conference before it is approved in final form and sent to the President for signing into law.

Mia said they are pushing for the creation of a national drug industry fund that will support the research activities of local scientists and local drug manufacturers.

"This was not mentioned in HB 2844, and we think this will be one of the strong pillars of a policy toward ensuring low prices of medicines in the long-term," said Mia.

Mia said dependence on parallel importation will only keep the country dependent on big pharmaceutical firms, and that the country should develop its capacity to produce its own medicines to be able to control its prices.

Multinational pharmaceutical firms, on the other hand, have said Philippine laws should stay close to the country's international commitments on trade and intellectual property rights.



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Noli to jobseekers: Shun shortcut

By Cynthia D. Balana

VICE PRESIDENT NOLI DE CASTRO has urged departing Filipinos to go through the right process, not the shortcut, when seeking employment abroad to stop illegal recruitment and other forms of abuse against Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs).

"It may take a long time but going through the process is the surest and safest way when seeking employment abroad," De Castro told migrant workers and leaders of government agencies involved in protecting OFWs during Monday's forum on OFWs sponsored by the Commission on Overseas Filipinos.

De Castro, presidential adviser on OFWs, said that doing the 'right thing' could boost the government's campaign against illegal recruitment.

He admitted that curbing illegal recruitment was difficult because many Filipinos still prefer to take the shortcut in seeking employment overseas.

"Illegal recruitment in the country promises fast and easy process but it also puts the lives of OFWs in danger," De Castro stressed.

De Castro admitted that curbing illegal recruitment was made even more difficult by those who choose convenience over safety.

At the same time, De Castro said the government was addressing the needs and concerns of OFWs who have contributed much in improving the economy.

Because of this, he said, the OFWs' welfare will continue to be on top of the government's priorities.

He cited as proof the recent signing by President Macapagal-Arroyo of Administrative Order 202 which established the interagency committee for the celebration of the Overseas Filipinos Month every December and the International Migrants Day every 18th day of December.

De Castro said the order aims to recognize the important role of more than eight million migrants in nation-building and national development.

"I'm glad that the committee was successful in consolidating the plans of the various government agencies and private organizations to celebrate this occasion which happens to be the first," he said.

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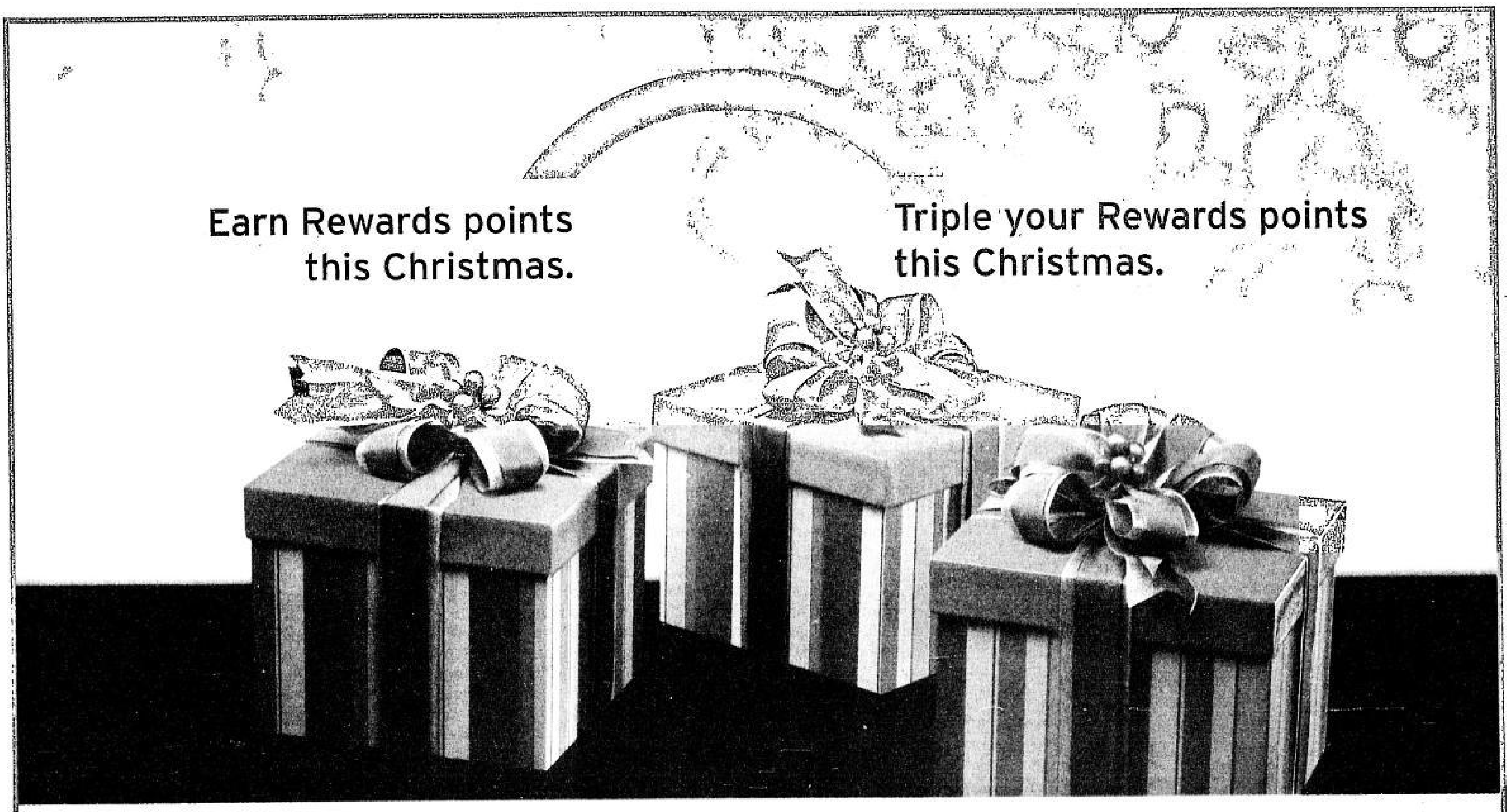
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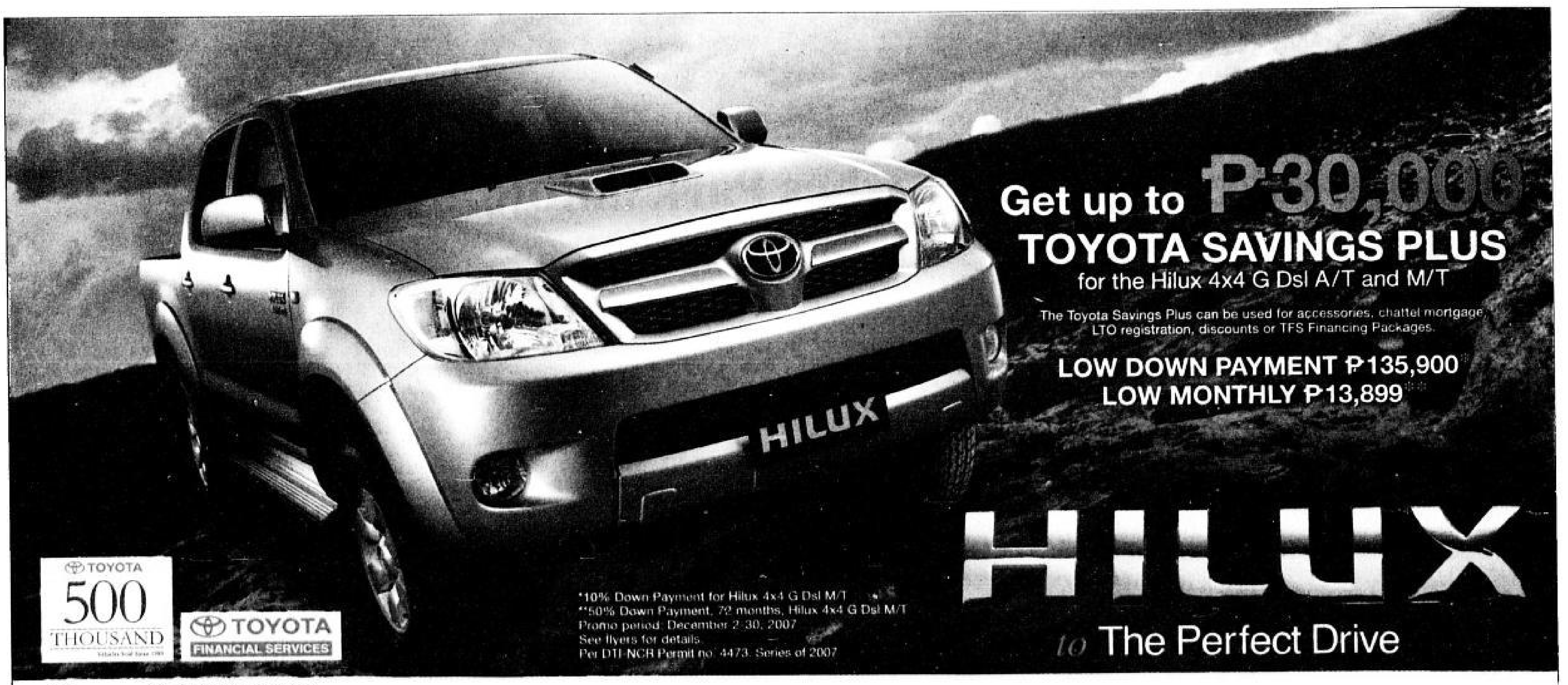

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After 40 years, Church revives body to look into land reform cases

By Beverly T. Natividad

WITH ITS SUCCESSFUL INtervention in the cause of the Sumilao farmers, the Church is now setting its sights on other land reform cases.

The Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines has reconvened its National Rural Congress (NRC) after 40 years to look closely into the government's Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program, particularly in the light of the Sumilao case and the expiration of the CARP in June 2008.

"This is the time to discuss closely what can be done," Cagayan de Oro Archbishop Antonio Ledesma, chair of NRC II's executive committee, told the INQUIRER.

Ledesma said NRC II was being convened to look into why rural poverty was still existing, and what the Church could do about it.

The last NRC was convened in 1967.

Weakness of law

The case of the Sumilao farmers illustrates the weakness of the law governing the CARP, Ledesma said.

He said that while the Church had committed to "keep an eye" on the Sumilao case, it also wanted to study other land reform cases in other provinces.

"It is part of the concern of NRC to look into all these cases of poverty and social injustice. There are many similar cases, but they are not reported," he said.

Ledesma said that with the CARP as a key issue of NRC II, the Church hoped to get the full view of its implementation nationwide through subregional consultations.

He said NRC II would undertake the consultations starting in January.

For CARP extension

Like it has done in the Sumilao case, the Church will take the "see, judge, act" approach in the other land reform cases that it will look into, Ledesma said.

He said the Church would also push for the extension of the CARP law, with accompanying improvements, for another 10 years.

Manila Auxiliary Bishop Broderick Pabillo appealed to San Miguel Foods Inc. (SMFI) not to appeal President Macapagal-Arroyo's order to revert the disputed Sumilao property back under CARP coverage.

"We are appealing to the conscience [of those from] San Miguel ... We are appealing to their social responsibility," Pabillo said in an interview over Catholic-run Radio Veritas.

It ain't over yet, farmers warned

From page A1

tween Ms Arroyo and Cojuangco would be "a major roadblock to the Sumilao farmers' demand for land."

He said "the farmers will surely face stiff opposition from SMC," whose affiliate, San Miguel Foods Inc. (SMFI), is now the owner of the land.

Indeed, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita acknowledged At a press conference in Malacañang that the order he signed on Tuesday by authority of Ms Arroyo did not grant the farmers ownership of the land.

'Spirit' of order

But he said the "spirit" of the order was clear.

"That is the objective," he said, pointing out that Ms Arroyo had wanted the farmers to reclaim the land considered as ancestral domain by the Higaonon tribe in Bukidnon but was now being developed as an agro-industrial park by SMFI.

Ermita did not give any timeline for the redistribution of the land to the farmers who marched 1,700 kilometers for two months from Mindanao to Metro Manila to press their claim.

'Concessions to Danding'

He appealed to the farmers to understand the predicament of the Palace, which, he said, was constrained to follow legal processes, including the "equal protection clause" for both the farmers and SMFI, which bought the property in 2002 from the Quisumbing family.

"I hope people could be reasonable enough to explain the meaning of the President's decision," Ermita said, adding that SMFI had 15 days to appeal Ms Arroyo's order, and the Office of the President several weeks to act on it.

Ocampo said the "political accommodation and economic concessions" granted Cojuangco by Ms Arroyo were preventing her and the Department of Agrarian Reform "from exercising political will to give the land back to the farmers."

He said these concessions "can be seen not only in the Sumilao farmers' case but [also] in controversial disputes, particularly over the multibillion-peso coconut levy fund."

"This also explains why Danding's SMC is now pushing for the expansion of its cassava plantation and ethanol project in more than 30,000 hectares of land in Negros, Isabela and Cagayan, which the Isabela-Cagayan farmers oppose," he said.

Ocampo, coauthor of House Bill No. 3059, or the proposed Genuine Agrarian Reform Act of 2007, said the Sumilao case was serving to highlight "the bogus character of the government's [CARP]."

Gov't as referee

"The Sumilao farmers' plight is a concrete case where landlords made use of the CARP itself to evade land distribution. Land-use conversion is one of the major arguments provided by CARP to landowners' legal arsenal to maintain ownership and control of lands," he said.

He cited DAR records showing that from 1979 to Dec. 31, 2003, there were 2,885 approved applications for land-use conversion involving 40,485.9124 hectares of agricultural land, and National Statistics Office records stating that in 2002, 827,892 hectares of agricultural land were converted to other uses.

Ermita said that in issuing a "political decision," the government was "bending over backward" in favor of the farmers.

"[But] there should be an understanding among the [contending parties]," he said, stressing that the government's role was only as a "referee."

"Let's wait for the respondent (SMFI) to receive the order and they will make a move. Let's not push the situation too hard ... Let's allow the process to be followed," he said.

SMC's corporate affairs office yesterday said the company was still awaiting a copy of the order. It reiterated its previous statement that it would issue a response only after it had received the document from Malacañang.

Ermita said he had asked Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Cardinal Rosales to advise the farmers to be patient because "a fact-finding mission has to be sent [to Bukidnon] to determine the [realities on the ground]."

Even Agrarian Reform Secretary Nasser Pangandaman said he had asked the farmers to wait for the finality of Ms Arroyo's order.

This means the farmers would be spending the holidays in their camp in front of the DAR central office in Quezon City—at least.

"If nobody will file a motion for reconsideration, there will be no aggrieved party, and the order will be final and executory after 15 days. By operation of law, we cannot just dip our hands in the case; we have to wait for the order of finality," Pangandaman told reporters.

He admitted that it might "take a while" for the farmers to realize their claim on the land.

Christmas away from home

Samuel Merida, one of the farmers, said he and his colleagues would not leave Manila until they were ensured that the land would be theirs.

"We will sacrifice, if that's necessary, even if we will not be with our families on Christmas. We can't return empty-handed," he told the INQUIRER.

Merida, his son Elgine, and his brother and nephew, Napoleon Merida Sr. and Jr., were among the 55 of the 163 farmer-claimants who marched to Manila to bring their plight directly to the government.

At dawn yesterday, the farmers left the College of the Holy Spirit on Mendiola, where they stayed overnight after the two meetings between Ms Arroyo and their representatives and lawyers.

They returned to their camp at DAR to plan their next moves.

Today the farmers will march again, this time to Paco, Manila, to meet with Cardinal Rosales.

They intend to update their principal supporter on their plans and to seek his advice.

Cease and desist

The farmers want the DAR to stop SMFI from constructing a hog farm on the property because the company failed to follow the original conversion plan promised by the former landowner, Norberto Quisumbing, in 1995.

They say that under DAR rules, the Quisumbings were obliged to undertake the conversion of the land into an agro-industrial park within five years. But the Quisumbings sold the property in 2002 to SMFI, which began to build a hog farm that, the farmers say, was never part of the original conversion plan.

Under DAR rules, the failure to complete the conversion would mean the land will again be subjected to CARP coverage and distributed to the farmers.

Pangandaman said that once the notice of CARP coverage was issued, the DAR would "promptly" act on the case.

He declined to say exactly how long the farmers had to wait to get their certificates of land ownership award. But he said DAR rules on land acquisition and distribution would be duly implemented. *With reports from Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson in Manila*

Sumilao not celebrating

By Ma. Cecilia Rodriguez
Inquirer Mindanao

IN BARANGAY SAN VICENTE in Sumilao, there is no celebration over the issuance of President Macapagal-Arroyo's land-use conversion order.

Rene Peñas, board member of the Mapadayonon Panaghiusa sa mga Lumad Alang sa Damlag (Mapalad Inc.) and the San Vicente Landless Farmers' Association, said Malacañang's decision was not enough to make them rejoice.

In an assembly held yesterday, the Sumilao farmers read together the memorandum issued by Ms Arroyo.

"That is short of what we have been asking for," said Mapalad treasurer Chiquita Redosendo.

"What we need is for the DAR to immediately issue a notice of coverage and install the farmers, which should be automatic under the CARP," she said.

Added Peñas: "We challenge the President to stand by her word. We urge her to come here to San Vicente and personally see to it that we are installed in our land."

But Sumilao Mayor Mary Ann Baula said she felt ill after hearing of the Malacañang decision.

She refused to be interviewed but sent a text message to the INQUIRER, saying that Tuesday was "the saddest day for the silent majority in Sumilao who want SMC to stay."

Gardener tags 2 Santiago aides in murder, then recants

By Marlon Ramos
Inquirer Southern Luzon

CAMP VICENTE LIM, LAGUNA—Two of the three suspects in the killing of designers' icon Ernest Santiago were released at noon yesterday after they were arrested earlier at his wake in Makati City and charged with robbery-homicide.

Assistant Provincial Prosecutor Alex Timog ordered the release of Alex Mosende and Anjo Luces upon the expiration of the 36-hour period for warrantless arrest. However, the other suspect, Zosimo Ragasa, remained under police custody.

Timog gave the suspects 10 days to file their counteraffidavits.

Pagsanjan Mayor George "E.R." Ejercito Estregan said Mosende and Luces vehemently denied the accusations against them.

Senior Supt. Felipe Rojas Jr., Laguna police director, said the cases filed against Mosende and Luces would undergo preliminary investigation. "If the prosecutor decides to release warrants, then we will immediately arrest them," Rojas said.

Dogs did not bark

Rojas told the INQUIRER the arrest of the three suspects proved their suspicion that the assailants were known to Santiago.

Estregan said Mosende was Santiago's foreman and live-in partner for 28 years while Luces was the victim's personal assistant for the past eight years. Ragasa was Santiago's gardener and caretaker of his house in Pagsanjan for 17 years.

"That would explain why the three dogs owned by the victim did not bark when they broke into the house of Santiago," he said.

Santiago, 71, was found dead inside his house in Barangay Poblacion II in Pagsanjan at around 9 a.m. on Sunday. Police said he died from two gashes on the right side of his head.

LOUIE CRUZ/CONTRIBUTOR

THE THIRD MAN Ejercito tags as a suspect in the Santiago murder during the wake on Tuesday night. The three men were subsequently released as the mayor failed to produce an arrest warrant.

Ragasa confesses

Rojas said investigators invited Ragasa early Tuesday after they received information that Santiago's missing Mitsubishi Strada was found along the national road in Barangay 39 in Infanta, Quezon, a day before.

Estregan personally led the police team that retrieved the vehicle. He said that while in Infanta, he tried to convince Ragasa "to admit any knowledge he had regarding the killing."

"I assured him that we will help him be under the Witness Protection Program of the government. Then suddenly, he broke down and admitted his participation in the crime. He said it was not his intention to kill his boss," Estregan said.

Estregan said Ragasa told him that he forcibly entered the house before dawn Sunday by destroying the glass window near the front door.

In his sworn statement, Ragasa said he then opened the door and let Luces in. He said Mosende was already inside the house the night before.

"He (Ragasa) said he was looking for (Santiago's) money when Tito Ernest suddenly awoke. He then thought of getting a dumbbell and hitting his boss twice in the head," Estregan said, speaking in English and Filipino.

After taking the money, two cellular phones, jewelry and other valuables, the three allegedly boarded Santiago's vehicle and sped toward Quezon.

'Brainwashed'

Estregan said Ragasa told him that both Luces and Mosende "brainwashed" him into stealing Santiago's P200,000 cash which the victim withdrew from the bank two days before he was killed.

The two suspects allegedly admitted to Ragasa that they were angry with Santiago for his failure to pay them their salaries for at least a year, the mayor said.

Estregan said the three planned the crime at the victim's newly opened Kilib Restaurant in Lucban, Quezon, a month ago.

Ragasa said Mosende gave him P40,000 while his two other cohorts had P80,000 each.

But before he was formally charged, Ragasa recanted.

"Hindi ko po pinatay si boss. Parang na-frame up lang po ako (I did not kill the boss. I was just framed up)," Ragasa said in an interview with ABS-CBN.

Santiago wake: Drama at Forbes Park unfolding

From page A1

This followed reports that Santiago's gardener, Zosimo Ragasa, had been arrested earlier that day, had confessed to the crime and had implicated Santiago's two longtime associates.

Closed-door meeting

Anticipating the police's arrival, some of Santiago's friends and colleagues, who are among Manila's movers and shakers, stayed way into the night. At a private room in the chapel, Santiago's closest friends and kin held a closed-door meeting. They were the ones who have been making preparations for Santiago's wake and funeral arrangements. *(See related story on this page.)*

In the group were advertising/PR executive Roberto Caballero, Santiago's close friend from the '70s, socialites Baby Girl Fricke and Malou Ocampo, retail executive Ramon San Agustin, Ed Sy, and Santiago's younger sister Nene Santiago Herrera, his only sibling left in the country.

They were meeting with Santiago's assistants, Alex Mosende and Anjo Luces, in the presence of lawyers Freddie Villamor and Paul Alcudia. Acting on behalf of Santiago's family, Caballero sought the counsel of Villamor and Alcudia for Mosende and Luces, who, the group knew as early as then, would be tagged as suspects.

Longtime associate

Mosende had been Santiago's friend for more than 20 years and had been working for Santiago in many of his landscaping projects. Luces had been working for Santiago for the past six years, most recently in the Kilib Sanctuary project in Quezon.

"They had no means for legal counsel, and since we wanted to get to the bottom of it, we had a long talk with them," Caballero later told the INQUIRER.

Tension in the courtyard

At the Santuario courtyard, as midnight approached, the tension and suspense were palpable, as Santiago's friends just milled about, many of them expressing disbelief and sadness that Santiago could have suffered a tragic fate in the hands of friends he had long trusted and supported.

Among them were Louie Cruz, Don Escudero, Larry Leviste, Ado Escudero (who left shortly), Joey Espino, Ben Payumo, Tony Marino, Ron Gomez, Budji Layug, Rusty Lopez, Arnel Ignacio—indeed a cross section of culture and lifestyle.

"We were waiting really for the (Pagsanjan) mayor to see what he had, like wanting a sense of relief so Ernest could have justice and find peace," said Cruz.

The presence of police cars outside Santuario and of the police and TV crews in the courtyard didn't ease the tension.

Finally long past midnight, Pagsanjan Mayor ER Ejercito arrived with the police and Santiago's gardener. According to Caballero, Ejercito told him that he didn't enjoy what he had to do but that he had to do it because Santiago was also his good friend.

Caballero merely asked that the media and the police respect the privacy of the chapel where Ernest remains lay.

Gardener recants

Curiously, the gardener was left to be interviewed by the media and to be even grilled by Ernest's friends. It was in these snatches of conversations that the gardener Ragasa said that he had recanted his earlier sworn statement and that he didn't kill Santiago.

In a dramatic scene, the gardener was brought before Santiago's coffin, the lid of which had been ordered shut by Caballero. "We feel it wasn't right for the police to pry into Ernest's body then because an autopsy had already been done, and the (autopsy) reports are available to them," Caballero later said.

In the discussions that followed with the mayor, it was discovered that the arresting party had no warrants of arrest for Mosende and Luces. Moreover, Caballero's group learned that Ragasa didn't have legal counsel around when he made his earlier statement to the police.

After some discussion, the mayor and Santiago's friends agreed that Mosende and Luces would go with Ejercito for routine questioning. So at past 2 a.m., in the glare of TV cameras, the two and the gardener were escorted out of the chapel and into the police vehicles to be driven back to Laguna for further questioning.

Legal process

"We just wanted the legal process to be followed, so that the guilty would be prosecuted and the innocent be left unharmed," Caballero later explained their move on that suspenseful night.

Yesterday, Mosende and Luces were released, in the absence of charges against them. According to Caballero, the gardener is still being held without legal counsel. Caballero also said that lawyer King Rodrigo, the son of the late Sen. Soc Rodrigo, has been approached to represent Mosende and Luces.

In the meantime, Ernest Santiago, the flamboyant artist whose laughter had brightened up the country's lifestyle scene, has yet to rest in peace.

Network war heats up over ABS-CBN report

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

TELEVISION GIANT GMA Network Inc. yesterday strongly denied a radio report linking it to the alleged manipulation of television ratings which was exposed by its rival ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.

In a statement, GMA Network said that ABS-CBN radio station DZMM "erroneously" aired a report that said media research firm AGB Nielsen identified GMA as the network that allegedly funded an operation to bribe metered homes in Bacolod City so they would watch GMA shows and thus influence TV ratings.

ABS-CBN filed a P63 million civil case before the Quezon City Regional Trial Court on Friday against AGB Nielsen for damages and injunction with an application for a temporary restraining order for the media research firm to shut down its service and investigate the extent of the ratings breach.

No evidence

GMA claimed that DZMM reporter Junrie Hidalgo used the angle, "AGB Nielsen umamin sa dayaan, GMA Network tahasang itinurong nasa likod ng dayaan (AGB Nielsen admits cheating, GMA Network named as the culprit behind the cheating)" after an interview with AGB Nielsen general manager Maya Reforma.

GMA, however, said that Reforma herself belied such accusation against the TV network in her affidavit filed before Quezon City regional trial court.

"There is no evidence that showed any significant impact on the National Urban Television Audience Measurement (NUTAM) data as a result of the activities purportedly launched by GMA," Reforma said in her affidavit.

Accurate

GMA claimed that when asked what she can say about ABS-CBN's request with the RTC to restrain AGB Nielsen from distributing its ratings data—Reforma was quoted by GMA as saying: "There is no basis for it. The data is accurate and reliable."

"GMA points out that this only proves there is no truth to allegations by ABS-CBN that GMA was involved in tampering with the AGB Nielsen ratings," the TV network said.

Reforma told THE INQUIRER that she made the statement on the basis of an affidavit shown to her by ABS-CBN as belonging to one of the informants of ABS-CBN who pointed at GMA as behind the alleged fraud.

She said she was just reading from the ABS-CBN informant's affidavit.

ABS-CBN said it stands by its report.

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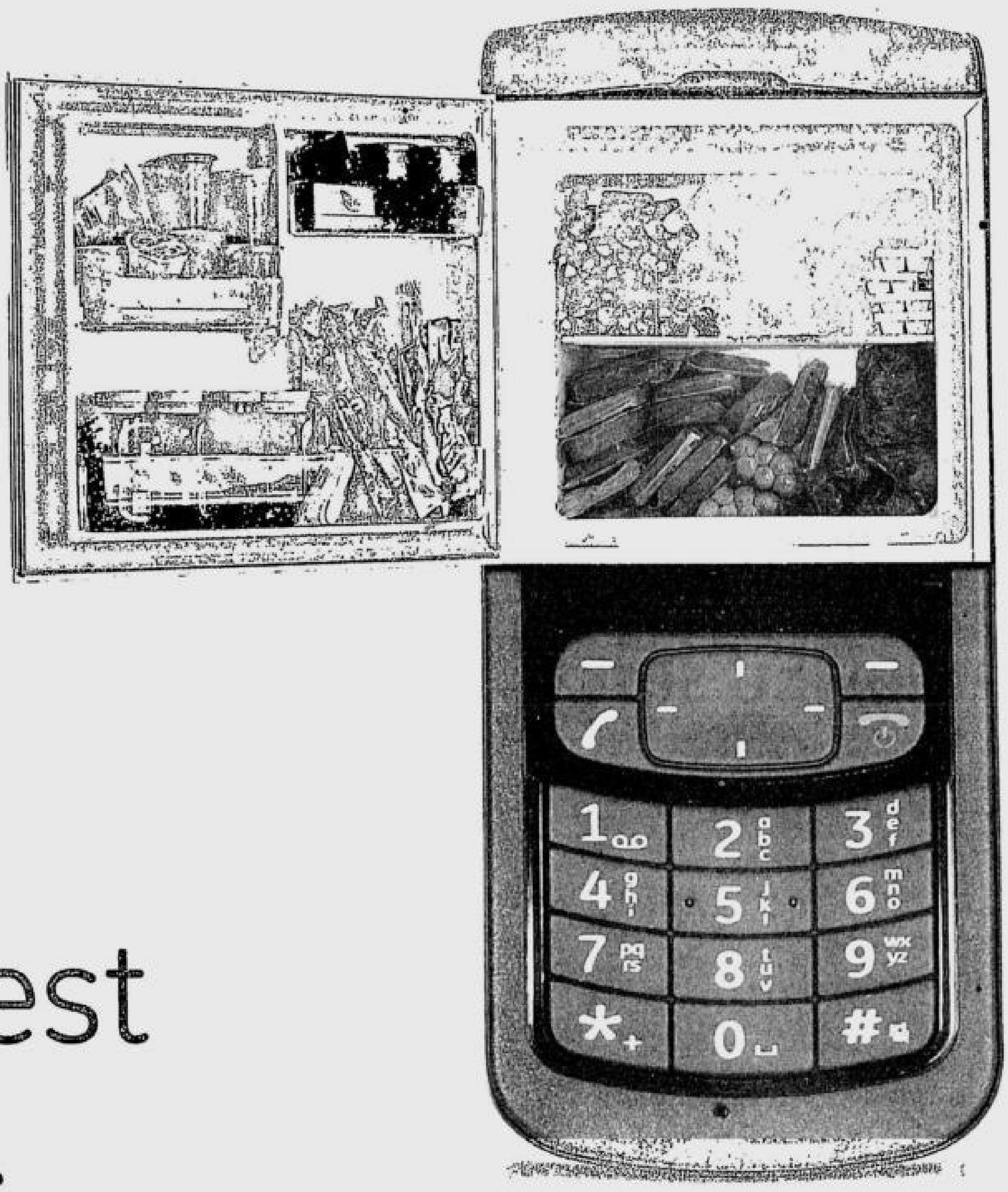

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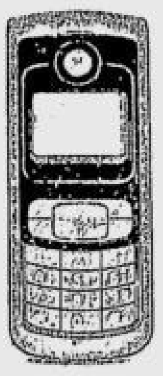

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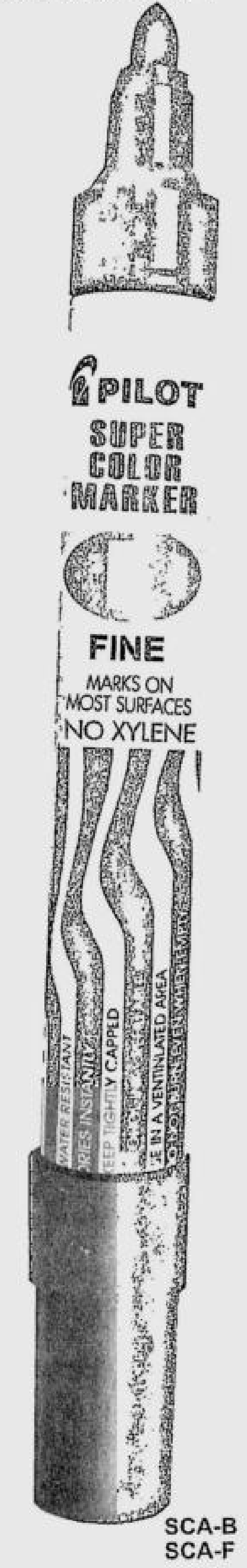

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GMA's ₱30-B 'pork' hit; deadlock looms on nat'l budget

From page A1

The P30 billion in pork barrel includes her intelligence and antipoverty funds, P3-billion Kilos Asenso fund, P1-billion Kalayaan sa Barangay programs, and over allotment for debt service, according to Lacson.

The Senate agreed to adopt the two antipoverty programs in its version only after rigid safeguards were adopted to check abuses.

Each senator and congressman is allocated a pork barrel, known as Priority Development Assistance Fund, which comes from the national budget to finance their pet projects. The pork barrel has been a notorious source of kickbacks for lawmakers.

Cut debt service

With government planners adjusting the peso-dollar rate in 2008 because of the strong Philippine currency, Lacson said this should prompt Malacañang to cut debt service payments by P12 billion and reallocate the money to social services.

With an excess debt service allocation, Lacson said the President would have access to more funds that she could declare as savings and then use as currency to curry political favor.

Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile, who has shepherded the 2008 budget in behalf of the Arroyo administration in the Senate, has insisted on keeping the proposed P295.7-billion allocation for interest payments in the Senate version.

The House of Representatives has slashed the debt service allocation by P17.8 billion in its budget version and reassigned part of the cut to other areas, such as the P4.7-billion increase in the Department of Health's budget.

Like Lacson, Sen. Loren Legarda proposed that Congress raise by P20 billion the outlay for social services by reallocating some of the funds from the reduction in interest payments.

Legarda said the Senate should also slash the lump sum allocations for Malacañang that are prone to corruption.

She said the P1.3 billion from the P1.5 billion for the Office of the President's budget to buy helicopters could be rechanneled to education, health, agriculture and environment.

At expense of the poor

She lashed out at the government for its misplaced obsession with achieving a balanced budget next year largely through the rushed sale of government assets and underspending in social services at the expense of the poor.

"It is disturbing if the move to balance the budget will be at the expense of reducing and unduly constricting the budget of key sectors. Public investments in health, education, agriculture and environment would have the greatest impact on addressing the problem of social inequities and deprivation. Instead of cutting the budget for social expenditures for the sake of a balanced budget, we should increase it significantly," she said.

Poor BIR, BOC performance

Legarda said that there was no way the government could achieve a zero deficit next year based on the performance of the Bureau of Internal Revenue and the Bureau of Customs.

"Actual revenue collection is way behind programmed collection. The burgeoning deficit is only held in check by continuous privatization activity and underspending for government services," she said.

Aided by revenues from the sale of a big-ticket power asset, the national government posted last month its biggest ever budget surplus of P54.10 billion.

Shortfalls in tax revenue collection have built up the past three quarters to a combined P56.02 billion, according to Legarda.

She said Finance Secretary Margarito Teves was able to "manage" the shortfall by raising the Bureau of the Treasury income, selling more government assets, and reducing expenditures by P38.68 billion in the last three quarters.

Legarda noted that even the International Monetary Fund had been critical of Teves' inept management of the BIR and to BOC.

HOLIDAY SPIRIT. President Arroyo hands over a gift to 8-month pregnant PO1 Leah Rose Cambri (right) who's holding her 1-year-old child. Gifts were given to selected PNP families under the Christmas Rice Program during the inauguration of the Pulis-Kalinga NCRPO complex for police personnel in Camp Bagong Diwa, Bicutan, Taguig.

LYN RILLON

236 lawmakers receive P200,000 bonus each

From page A1

cover payment of yearend rentals, transportation and other costs, they said. The funds are part of the official House budget.

The funds are released to both administration and opposition members of the House in full transparency and reported to the Commission on Audit, Ramiro and Romualdo said.

Speaker Jose de Venecia said the funds were for the "hardworking" members of the lawmakers' respective staff "in Manila and in the provinces."

"Technically speaking ... they are casuals," De Venecia said in a telephone interview.

Malacañang recently announced that national government employees were to receive P10,000 in bonuses for the Christmas holidays.

Properly receipted

"These are distributed through checks, signed for and properly receipted," De Venecia said.

Asked if the funds may be used for the lawmakers' gift-giving in their respective constituencies, De Venecia said they were far from being so.

"Gift-giving is a congressman's own lookout," De Venecia said.

When Congress went on recess in October, the House leadership also released P200,000 for the lawmakers' district offices.

De Venecia then made the same explanation that the funds were properly documented as opposed to the funds in cash distributed to lawmakers in Malacañang.

In October, around 90 administration lawmakers received cash gifts worth between P200,000 and P500,000 during a meeting in Malacañang.

The amounts were given a few hours before President Macapagal-Arroyo received a yearlong immunity from another impeachment case. The first complaint, which was filed by lawyer Roel Pulido and provided a bar on other cases, was eventually dismissed.

Pampanga Gov Ed still waiting for disbursement voucher

From page A1

(LPP), where's the disbursement voucher?

Panlilio on Tuesday said the LPP leadership had not yet replied to his request for a copy of the document as proof that the amount was LPP money.

He made the request in a Dec. 3 letter to the LPP in reply to its Nov. 26 letter asking him to issue the group an official receipt.

The cash-giving stirred controversy as opposition leaders raised suspicions of bribery, having come after the filing of another impeachment complaint against President Macapagal-Arroyo.

During the Senate's Nov. 14 inquiry into the incident, Panlilio did not call the P500,000 cash bribe money but expressed the view that it was illegally disbursed since no one had come forward to show proof of its source.

Disclaiming/claiming

"I said I am willing to issue an official receipt, but please give us the disbursement papers to prove that the money really came from LPP in the context of your two opposing reports disclaiming and claiming that the funds came from LPP," the governor said.

On the heels of denials from certain political quarters, the LPP on Oct. 23 admitted that the money came from its "capability-building program" for neophyte governors like Panlilio.

The money, placed in a paper gift bag, was handed by a woman to Bulacan Gov. Joselito Mendoza in a room near the Malacañang's Heroes Hall after a meeting of local executives. Mendoza, who got the same amount, handed the bag to Panlilio's chief of staff.

Bank of Commerce

The paper bundles on the bills showed markings that the money was withdrawn from Bank of Commerce in Angeles City in Pampanga.

In the meeting, the officials agreed to receive help for barangay projects after Panlilio made it known to Mendoza that he would not accept money if it was used for the barangay election scheduled for Oct. 29.

Mendoza said the P500,000 cash was deposited in a bank at the account of the provincial government. He reiterated on Monday that he would not return the money because he would use it for barangay projects.

Keeping cash as evidence

Panlilio said he expected the Senate blue ribbon committee to propose a measure on illegally handed out cash and what actions should local officials take in case they find themselves in similar situations.

The committee allowed Panlilio to keep the money at the provincial capitol's vault to await proper disposition or as evidence in complaints.

Lawyer Oliver Lozano and a lawyers' association have filed separate graft cases against Panlilio and other elected officials who confirmed getting cash in Malacañang on Oct. 11. *With a report from Carmela Reyes, Inquirer Central Luzon*

PANLILIO

Talk rife Malacañang mulling over extension of Esperon term

From page A1

Ermita said he was not aware of any talk or plan to extend Esperon's term.

The talk persists that President Macapagal-Arroyo will extend Esperon's term as a reward for quashing the failed revolt of Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV and Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim on Nov. 29.

Also, Esperon has put himself in the forefront of the war against the communist rebels.

Two more years

Last week, Esperon said he expected the decades-long communist insurgency to become inconsequential in two years because the rebels' ranks were rapidly dwindling.

Esperon estimated the number of rebels would be cut to 3,000 from 7,000 by 2009, one year ahead of the deadline set by Ms Arroyo for the military to defeat or significantly reduce the rebels. So, he needs two more years to redeem Ms Arroyo's pledge to defeat the insurgency before her term ends in 2010.

Yano said it was "not proper" to consider his personal ambitions when soldiers were dying in the battlefield, and that the decision lay solely with Ms Arroyo.

"If that is the decision [to extend Esperon's term], I'm sure it is a well-advised decision. As I have said, only the President has that prerogative, and we should not strip her of that prerogative," said Yano, who heads the military's largest command with around 78,000 soldiers under his supervision.

The CGPA is traditionally considered a serious frontrunner for the post of AFP chief of staff. Esperon and his predecessors—Efren Abu and Generoso Senga—were all CGPAs.

But all three-star generals in the AFP are considered in the running for the post.

Ready to retire

Apart from Yano, they are Lt. Gen. Cardozo Luna, commander of the Eastern Mindanao Command; Lt. Gen. Rodolfo Obaniana, commander of the Southern Luzon Command; Lt. Gen. Pedrito Cadungog, the deputy chief of staff; and Vice Adm. Rogelio Calunsag, flag officer in command of the Philippine Navy.

Yano pointed out that the AFP chief of staff was the only military officer who could serve beyond the mandatory retirement age of 56.

He refused to comment on whether there was a need to extend Esperon's term. "I think it is best that we leave that to the wisdom of the President. She is the appointing authority," he said.

He added that whatever Ms Arroyo would decide would be backed by members of the Army.

The executive secretary said he did not know where such talk was coming from, adding that he had not discussed the matter with the President and that it was not even a subject of conversation at a Christmas party in Malacañang on Tuesday night, where generals were present.

Ermita said he spoke with Esperon about the latter's retirement two weeks ago, when they were both present at the airport ceremony welcoming Ms Arroyo from official visits to Europe and Kuwait.

"Yes, sir, anytime, sir," was Esperon's reply to the question of whether he was ready for retirement, Ermita said.

At any rate, Ermita said, it was the President who would decide whether or not to extend Esperon's term.

"The selection of commanders of the [AFP] and the Philippine National Police is the responsibility of the Commander in Chief... She's the appointing authority; she can extend or not extend [terms of office]," Ermita told reporters.

Wife appreciates extension

Esperon's wife, Lorna Esperon, a doctor at the AFP Medical Center, said she and her family would "appreciate" the extension of her husband's term. But she stressed that this would depend on the President.

She denied spreading the current rumor and said she felt "bad" that certain quarters were accusing her of doing so: "I will clarify things. It is not me telling the people that my husband's [term will be] extended. It is not my personality to do that. In fact, I am eager to take care of my children."

She said she was just a "silent worker" involved in uplifting the welfare of soldiers and leading medical missions.

Lorna Esperon also said she was not "dictating" on her husband to seek an extension.

Longest serving

"If given the chance, we will appreciate it because it is only the Commander in Chief, our loving President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, who [holds that] decision," she said.

If he does retire in February, Esperon would have served longest among the AFP chiefs under the Arroyo administration.

So far, there have been eight military chiefs since Ms Arroyo assumed office in 2001.

She has extended the terms of three—Abu, Roy Cimatu and Benjamin Defensor, who served only a total of 69 days.

Abu was AFP chief of staff when the "Hello Garci" wiretapping scandal broke out in 2005. The tapes, supposedly between Ms Arroyo and then Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano, detailed alleged cheating in the 2004 presidential election and mentioned a number of ranking military officials, including Esperon. *With a report from Christine O. Avendaño*

ESPERON: There's the pledge.

YANO: It's up to the President.

Changing of the guard ...

From page A1

ANOTHER MAKATI STANDOFF. Makati police try to pry open the locked door of the Philcomsat office where four security guards of the Locsin board locked themselves in to prevent the new PCGG nominees to the board from entering the premises. ERIK ARAZAS

VERBAL CALISTHENICS. Lawyer Lorna Kapunan (back to camera) representing the rival Philcomsat board figures in a shouting match with Roy Reig of the Enrique Locsin board inside the Philcomsat office at the Pacific Star Bldg. in Makati City. ERIK ARAZAS

pointed by the PCGG, the agency tasked with recovering the ill-gotten wealth of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos and his cronies. *(See "What Went Before" on this page.)*

Monopoly

The Philcomsat group (Philcomsat, Philippine Overseas Telecommunications Corp. (POTC) and their PHC subsidiary whose cash hoard was derived from the group's monopoly of live satellite feed during the Marcos regime) were sequestered in the 1980s from business allies of Marcos.

The government and private shareholders subsequently entered into a compromise agreement, although control for the group continued to swing back and forth between directors appointed by the PCGG and Bildner's group.

At stake is control of the three telecommunications companies and about P1 billion in liquid assets held by the group.

Enrile daughter is chair

The new PHC board, which elected the daughter of Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile, Katrina Ponce Enrile as director and chair, set out to take control of the office yesterday but their lawyers could not enter as the glass doors were locked and blocked by a heavy shelf.

Joel Velarde, one of the guards who barricaded themselves inside the office, said they were acting under the instructions of their chief of security, Arturo Cantolino, who told them to stay put starting 9 p.m. Tuesday. He said they were unarmed.

At 2 p.m. yesterday, lawyers for the new board, Lorna Kapunan and Dennis Manzanal, said they would "exercise their rightful ownership of the property" and force the guards out.

"This is our property. We can do what we want with it," Kapunan said. Manzanal showed a copy of a condominium certificate of title stating that the owner of the second floor of the building was not PHC but Philcomsat itself.

A group of six Makati policemen was called in but they did not participate in resolving the standoff. Elsewhere in the building, tenants and patrons went in and out of the offices, oblivious of the tension on the second floor.

Locksmith

Just before 3 p.m., a locksmith opened the door, and the four guards left the office on their own. In turn, the security guards of the new board took their positions inside the office, and, again, locked the doors.

Outside, a testy exchange that turned into a shouting match occurred between Kapunan and Roy Reig, counsel for the Locsin group, who questioned the group's forcible entry.

"Show us the writ. Then we'll abide," Reig told Kapunan.

Kapunan cited the appointment by the PCGG of the new board, saying it was the "legitimate" board that was recognized by the government.

Saguisag son

Reig was joined by Rebo Saguisag, son of former Sen. Rene Saguisag, who used to be the lead counsel for the Locsin group. Reig said the question of who was the legitimate Philcomsat board had yet to be resolved.

He said the Locsin group had a pending motion for a temporary restraining order filed with the Sandiganbayan on the Philcomsat's stockholders' meeting on Nov. 19 that elected the new board.

Until that is resolved, the Locsin group will not allow the "new" board to set up office, Reig said.

"We'll not leave. We'll stay here to make sure nothing is brought in and nothing is brought out. The files inside are ours, and we won't allow them to take anything," he said.

Shifts

Rebo said the security detail provided by Seca Security Agency for the Locsin group would continue manning the office despite the presence of the new board's own guards. They will go on shifts as usual though there are no activities in the office, he said.

"The (Locsin-led) board can meet anywhere. There's always Jollibee or Chowking," Rebo said, joking.

Complete reversal

As of yesterday afternoon, eight of the Locsin group's security guards were in position just outside the office.

Inside and behind chained doors were about four of the new board's security guards, in a complete reversal of the situation just hours before.

"We are now in control of [PHC]," said Erlinda I. Bildner, president and CEO of the rival board of Philcomsat. "We've taken back something that is ours all along."

Bildner said she and other company directors had found that the company was being "plundered" in "staggering" amounts.

"We found checks in huge amounts payable to the personal accounts of the directors and their girlfriends," she told the INQUIRER shortly after entering the premises of PHC.

She accused the rival group led by Locsin and Concepcion Poblador of using company funds "to buy TROs (temporary restraining orders)" in an attempt to thwart the moves of private shareholders at every step.

"We've discovered unbelievable looting here," Bildner said. "The checks are going out by the millions."

No looting

Poblador denies any looting. "There is no looting going on. Everything is accounted for. That's why we're doing an audit to make things transparent to show our accountability to our stockholders," she said.

Bildner said the entire Philcomsat group—Philcomsat, POTC and their PHC subsidiary—was worth approximately P4 billion as of the last audit in 2000.

She believes that the present value has now come down to P2 billion.

In the case of cash-rich PHC, she pointed out that Philip Brodett, a director allied with the rival camp, had testified before the Senate that the company held P700 million in cash and marketable securities.

Since there is only "P100 million to P200 million" left in the company's bank accounts, "they looted and plundered as much as P600 million," she said.

More than 50 cases

Poblador said that if the Bildner group "didn't file more than 50 cases against our group, we would not have to spend so much on legal fees. Of course, we have to defend ourselves."

Poblador said the only way to resolve the accusations being hurled by one group against the other was to have an independent audit of all the three companies.

"But what has happened the Bildner group, which has physical control of Philcomsat and POTC, has not been audited since 2000," she said.

Poblador assailed the illegal entry yesterday of the guards hired by the Bildner group into the PHC office.

Makati cops hands off

Reig said the Locsin group was preparing charges of illegal detention and trespassing against Bildner's group.

"They gained access to the office with an expired condominium certificate title and a board resolution that was self-serving," he said in an interview. "Then they brought armed security personnel and forced our guards out."

Reig expressed disappointment at the decision of the Makati police to stay out of the dispute.

"The police are [have adopted a] hands off [policy]. We're very frustrated," he said. "This is plain brute force they're using and we don't want to stoop down to their level."

No legal basis

Reig said the Bildner group's move had no legal basis, especially since the normal procedure for taking possession of physical assets or premises was to request for assistance from a court sheriff to serve a lawful writ.

"In this case, they brought their own armed security personnel, about 30 of them," he said.

Bildner, however, was unfazed, and challenged her rivals to file charges in court against her and her group.

"We are ready to face them," she said.

WHAT WENT BEFORE

Philcomsat pioneer in satellite communications

PHILCOMSAT HOLDINGS CORP. (PHC), a subsidiary of Philippine Communications Satellite Corp. (Philcomsat), was placed under the control of the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG) in 1986 when shares of its parent firm, Philippine Overseas Telecommunications Corp. (POTC), were sequestered by the government on allegations that these had been acquired illegally.

Years later, a compromise agreement between the government and businessman Potenciano Ilusorio, the original owner of 5,400 POTC shares, was made, leaving the government with 35 percent of the shares.

This stake enabled the government to have nominees on the PHC board of directors.

In 2004, Enrique Locsin and other PCGG nominees were elected to the PHC board. The rival faction headed by Victor Africa and Erlinda Ilusorio-Bildner petitioned the Makati Regional Trial Court to invalidate the election, saying the PHC nomination and election committee had wrongly recognized Locsin's proxy nomination instead of Africa's proxy nomination.

Interlocking directorship

The court battle was part of a longstanding tussle among rival shareholders for control of the PHC, Philcomsat and POTC, which have interlocking directorships.

Philcomsat pioneered international satellite communications in the Philippines by being the country's exclusive representative to the International Communications Satellite Organization (Intelsat). Philcomsat's clients included telecommunications giant Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co.

Revenue from the satellite business has dried up because of the competition posed by fiber optics in transmitting voice, data and images.

Locsin board nullified

On Oct. 14, 2006, the Makati RTC nullified the election of the Locsin board and recognized as valid the Africa board. On April 12, 2007, the court issued a formal execution of the 2006 ruling.

On April 24 this year, the Africa-Bildner group went to the second floor of the Pacific Star building in Makati City to evict the PCGG board physically, but found the office closed.

The PCGG board questioned the ruling before the Court of Appeals, arguing that the local court had no jurisdiction over ill-gotten wealth cases. On April 26, the appeals court issued a temporary restraining order against the enforcement of the ruling.

The Africa-Bildner group filed an appeal. The same group has accused PCGG nominees of dissipating the assets of PHC. A Senate inquiry into the allegations resulted in a recommendation to prosecute Locsin and other PCGG nominees. ***Cyril L. Bonabente, Inquirer Research***

Fa la la la: Long Christmas ...

From page A1

Employees are expected at their government and private offices on Dec. 26 (Wednesday) until Dec. 28 (Friday).

The four-day New Year holiday begins on Dec. 29 (Saturday) and ends on Jan. 1 (Tuesday).

Dec. 31 special holiday

Under Proclamation No. 1353, Dec. 30 (Sunday) is a regular holiday marking the martyrdom of national hero Jose Rizal. Dec. 31—the last day of the year—has been declared a special holiday.

It's back to work for the entire government bureaucracy and the private sector on Jan. 2 (Wednesday).

Ermita said President Macapagal-Arroyo would be spending Christmas with her family in Malacañang. But she would celebrate New Year's Eve in Baguio City.

To boost tourism, Ms Arroyo made "holiday economics"—the practice of moving observance of holidays in order to give workers long weekends—an official government policy when she signed into law Republic Act No. 9492 in July.

RA 9492, "An Act Rationalizing the Celebration of Holidays," mandates that most holidays, except for those with religious significance, will be observed across the country on a Monday.

Thus, if June 12 falls on a weekend, Independence Day will be celebrated on the next Monday. The same principle applies if June 12 falls on any day except Monday.

Movable holidays

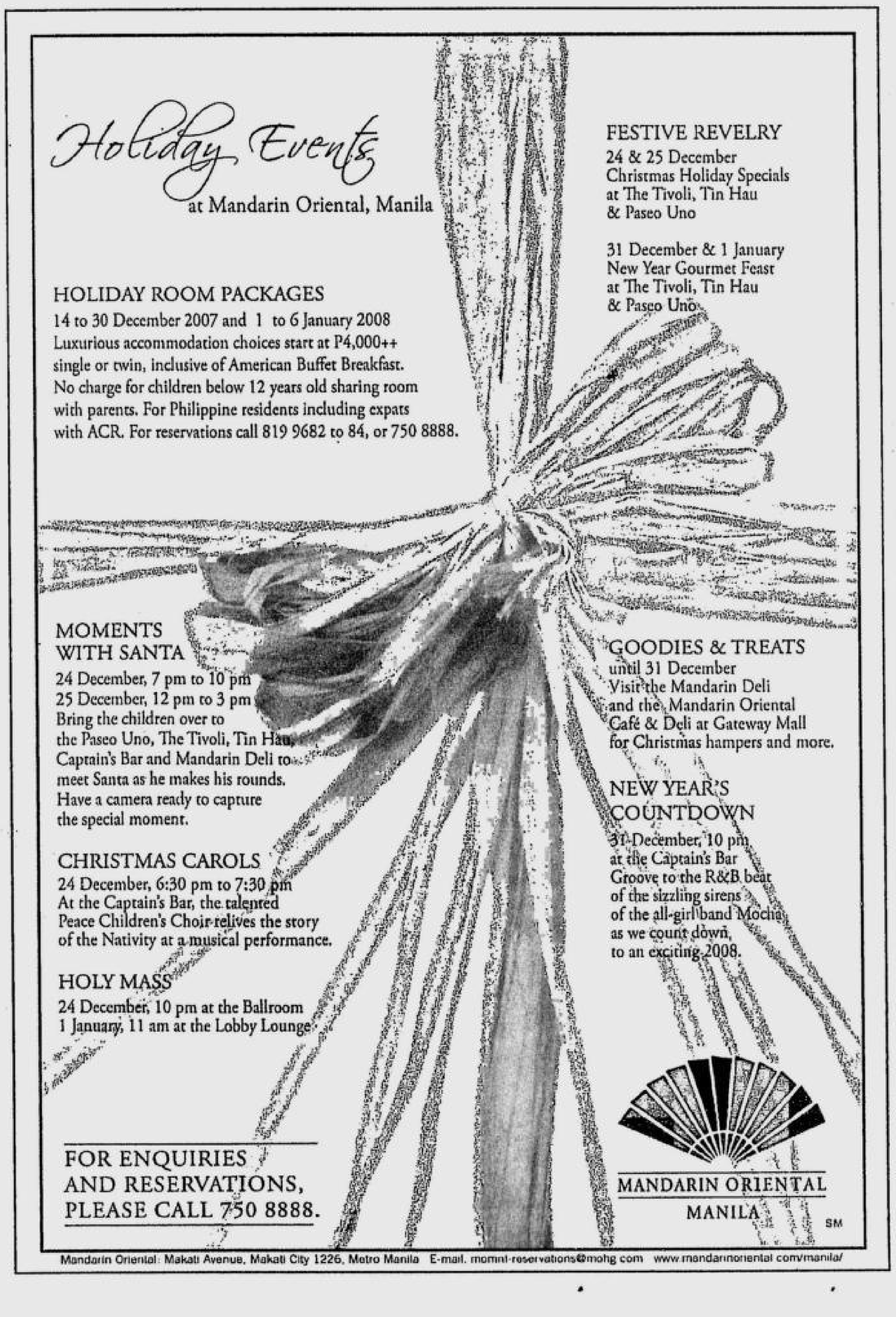
The other "movable" legal holidays are Bataan Day (April 9), Labor Day (May 1), Ninoy Aquino Day (Aug. 21), National Heroes Day (Aug. 31) and Bonifacio Day (Nov. 31).

Holidays that are to be observed on the date itself are Christmas Day (Dec. 25), New Year's Eve (Dec. 31), New Year's Day (Jan. 1), Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Eid'l Fitr and All Saints' Day (Nov. 1).

Under the labor code, employers must pay 200 percent of the daily rate of their employees who report for work on legal holidays—Jan. 1, April 9, May 1, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, June 12, National Heroes Day, the end of Ramadan, Nov. 30, Christmas Day and Dec. 30.

On special holidays, employers must pay an additional 30 percent over the regular rate.

Considered special holidays are Aug. 21 (Ninoy Aquino Day), Nov. 1, Election Day, Dec. 31, and Black Saturday. The President may declare other special holidays from time to time. *Michael Lim Ubac*



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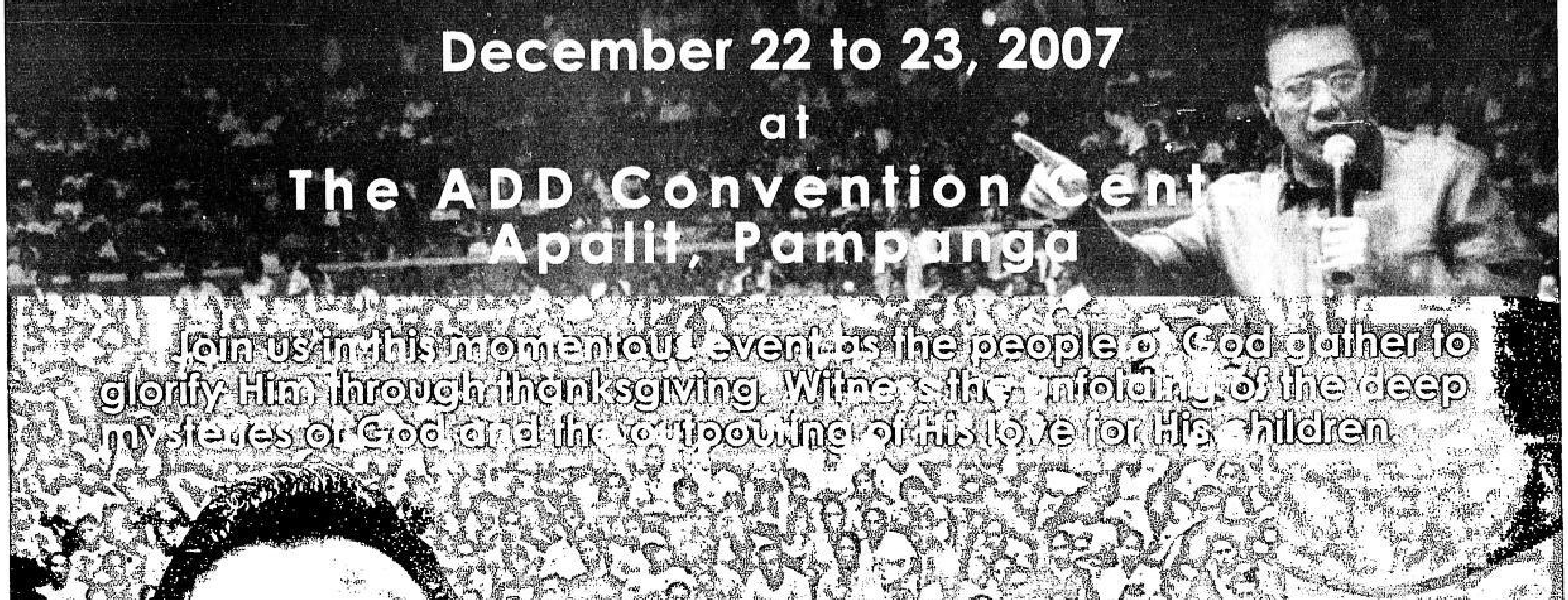

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Jonas ma files petition for writ of amparo

By Leila B. Salaverria

THE MOTHER OF MISSING ACTIVIST Jonas Burgos yesterday sought a writ of amparo to force police and military agencies, as well as the Commission on Human Rights, to help her search for her son.

In a petition filed with the Court of Appeals, Edita Burgos alleged that the military, the police and the CHR know what happened to her son but are hiding what they know about the incident.

The writ of amparo, which compels law enforcement agencies to search for a missing person, was recently made available by the Supreme Court in order to help resolve hundreds of cases of extrajudicial killings and disappearances.

Jonas, the son of the late press freedom fighter Joe Burgos, was abducted by armed men at the Ever Gotesco mall in Quezon City on April 28, 2007. The license plate on the vehicle used to kidnap Jonas was traced to the 56th Infantry Batallion compound in Norzagaray, Bulacan.

Top officials summoned

Burgos asked the appellate court to direct the police to summon top military officials led by chief of staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr. and Army Commanding General Lt. Gen. Alexander Yano explain their actions in connection with the abduction of Jonas, and to open their camps for inspection.

She also asked that the Commission on Human Rights chair Purificacion Quisumbing be ordered to provide her with copies of the statements, as well as the testimonies, of military officials it had questioned in connection with her son's alleged abduction.

Aside from Esperon, Yano and Quisumbing, Philippine National Police Director General Avelino Razon Jr. was also named a respondent in the case.

Covering up the truth

"They know who abducted Jonas, who ordered his abduction, why he was abducted and what they have done to him, whether he [is] still alive, where he is or where his body is buried. However, the three investigating agencies now appear to have conspired to cover up the truth," she said.

Burgos said she had received information that a certain 1Lt. Jaime Mendaros Jr., an Intelligence Officer of the 56th Infantry Battalion, had recommended to the Commander General of the 703rd Infantry Brigade that Jonas be deleted from the Order of Battle for the second quarter of the year because he had already been "neutralized."

She also cited a special report from the Armed Forces of the Philippines, issued by Esperon, which tagged Jonas as a member of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army. This established the motive for her son's abduction, she claimed.

Burgos alleged that there was good reason to believe that 56th IB commanding officer Lt. Col. Melquiades Feliciano ordered Jonas' abduction or allowed his abductors to use the license plate TAB-194 in the incident.

Suspended investigation

The military had denied the accusation and said the license plate had been lost or stolen from the Army camp.

As for the CHR, Burgos said it suspended its investigation into Jonas' disappearance on the "false" ground that she was uncooperative. She also said the commission "abdicated" its duty when it asked the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines to continue the search for Jonas.

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2 missing UP students not with us, Army insists

By Alcuin Papa

THE TWO MISSING UNIVERSITY OF THE Philippines students are not in the custody of the military, Army chief Lt. Gen. Alexander Yano insisted yesterday.

In a talk with reporters at the V. Luna Medical Center yesterday, Yano said he acted on an earlier request submitted by Akbayan party-list Rep. Loretta "Etta" Rosales to locate Sherlyn Cadapan and Karen Empeno.

"*Wala* (she is not with us). To be very specific, no less than Mrs. Etta Rosales requested me and I readily acted on that and there have been no positive results," Yano said.

He explained that as a result of Rosales' request, his office made some inquiries with some units under his command. But the inquiries yielded nothing, the Army chief said.

Yano was reacting to claims made by a witness in a testimony before the Court of Appeals Tuesday that he saw Cadapan chained to a bed inside the headquarters of the 24th Infantry Battalion based in Bulacan in September 2006.

New claims

The court is hearing a petition of habeas corpus filed by the parents of Cadapan, 30, and Empeno, 23. The two have been missing since June 2006. They were abducted allegedly by soldiers in Hagonoy, Bulacan together with farmer Manuel Merino.

Witness Raymond Manalo also said in the hearing that he saw Empeno and Merino in the same Bulacan camp.

Manalo and his brother, Reynaldo, said they were abducted by the para-military group the Citizens Armed Forces Geographical Unit (Cafgu) in San Ildefonso, Bulacan in February 2006. The military claimed the two are members of the New People's Army (NPA). While under detention, the two escaped last August and are now under the protection of the courts' writ of amparo.

When asked if he would investigate the new claims on Cadapan, Yano insisted that the Army had already done its part.

"There have been some requests outside the judicial process and I have been very supportive. Without any fanfare I have looked into the matter and I have not received any such report (of Cadapan's custody with the military)."

Yano said the matter is now with the courts anyway. "We'd rather go through the process because that has already been taken cognizance by the court and I may be preempting the findings of the court. I'd rather wait for the judicial process to take its due course."

No shortcuts

He also said it was his policy to "to respect human rights and to operate within the bounds of law. There should be no shortcuts because in the long run, it will not be to the benefit of the armed forces and the government."

Yano said he was also willing to surrender any member of the Army if they are suspected to be involved in criminal activities including the disappearances of militants.

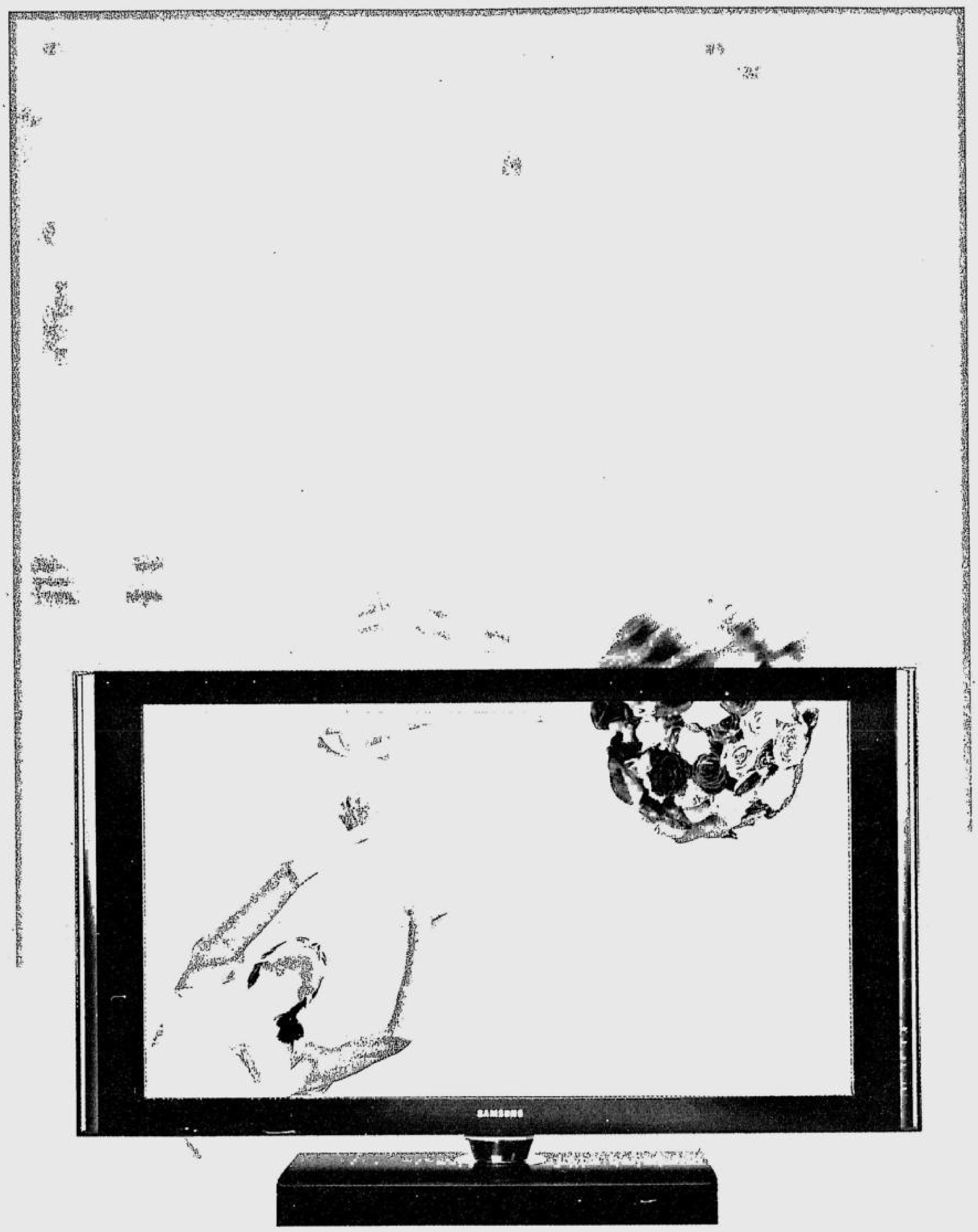
Militant groups have said the Philippine Army was responsible for the several cases of abductions and human rights abuses. This includes the abduction of Jonas Burgos, son of press freedom icon Jose "Joe" Burgos Jr., last April 28.

Police investigators traced the license plate on a vehicle used in Burgos' abduction to the headquarters of the 56th Infantry Battalion based in Norzagaray, Bulacan.

The military has also denied it had Burgos in their custody.

Yesterday, Edita Burgos sought a writ of amparo to compel the military and police to look for her son.

"Anything that would help us find the truth then it is for the good not only for the Philippine Army but the entire Filipino nation … I am very supportive of any effort to that extent," Yano said.



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Breakthrough

EDITORIAL

THE FARMERS FROM SUMILAO WHO MARCHED 1,700 kilometers "from Mindanao to Malacañang" reached a crucial milestone last Monday. They met (twice) with President Macapagal-Arroyo, and in candid discussions persuaded her to act in their favor. The following day, the President issued an executive order, revoking the reclassification of the disputed land. The entire 144-hectare property is agricultural land, the order declared.

Both the farmers and Malacañang officials called the President's decision an important first step or a critical new start. The Palace was decidedly sanguine. "I believe this revocation order is a significant first step and gives teeth to the intention of the President to really help the farmers," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye told reporters after personally handing the farmers a copy of the new order. The farmers' chief counsel was a little more melancholy. "It will be the start of another long battle to return the land to the farmers," lawyer Marlon Manuel said.

The farmers themselves recognized the President's order as "a big milestone in our request to reclaim our land" and said they were grateful. At the same time, mindful of the long road (literally and legally) that they had traveled, they continued to press their case. In a statement they issued, they said: "While we rejoice at this victory, we are aware that this revocation is but a partial redress of the grave injustice that was committed against us that led to the dispossession of our land 10 years ago. This redress is already long overdue."

Apparently, for Senators Gregorio Honasan and Benigno Aquino III, not overdue enough. Aquino, in particular, disappointed the constituency his martyred father gave life to—the middle forces that form the basis of our Edsa-inspired democracy—with his comments about the interests of business. It was the Cojuangco, the hacienda scion, in him talking.

Has Ms Arroyo's (belated) embrace of the Sumilao issue really put the interests of landowners and big business at greater risk? What arrant nonsense. Those who think the threshold the Sumilao farmers crossed is dangerously low (dangerous, that is, for landowners) should consider what the farmers went through: an initial victory, followed by years of consuming frustration, and leading to the difficult decision to march to Malacañang.

Indeed, the farmers lost the legal case because the Ramos administration and the Davide Supreme Court gave credence to a landlord's fantasy (Norberto Quisumbing Jr.'s ambitious development plan for the Sumilao property). We will not quarrel with that decision, but wish to point out only its consequences: Quisumbing failed to turn fantasy into reality during the given period. When those five years lapsed, the landowner failed to meet the Court's own essential condition.

Five years, Supreme Court decisions—these and other facts raise the standard for executive action, not lower it, as Aquino and Honasan seem to fear. Indeed, years of frustration have forced the Sumilao farmers into what could be a politically untenable position: Despite the President's order, they refuse to go back to Bukidnon until they are "finally installed" in their land. But the order has to work its way through the legal and bureaucratic processes, the same system that caused the farmers' unquiet desperation in the first place. As an official of the Department of Agrarian Reform has said, it may take as much as a year to finally install the farmers.

Of course, none of this means that the President has no other options but to wait for the courts to validate her revocation order. She can, for instance, exert her influence on San Miguel Corp., the parent company of the firm which bought Quisumbing's interest in Sumilao. Its CEO, Eduardo Cojuangco Jr., is a pivotal political ally. (Also, Cojuangco's main political lieutenant, Gilbert Teodoro Jr., serves as defense secretary.) She can also order Agrarian Reform Secretary Nasser Pangandaman to expedite the process. And so on.

The President's order thus puts the farmers in yet another dilemma. They can insist on a solution that is not politically feasible, or trust the system that brought them so much grief. So much for unduly favoring the landless.

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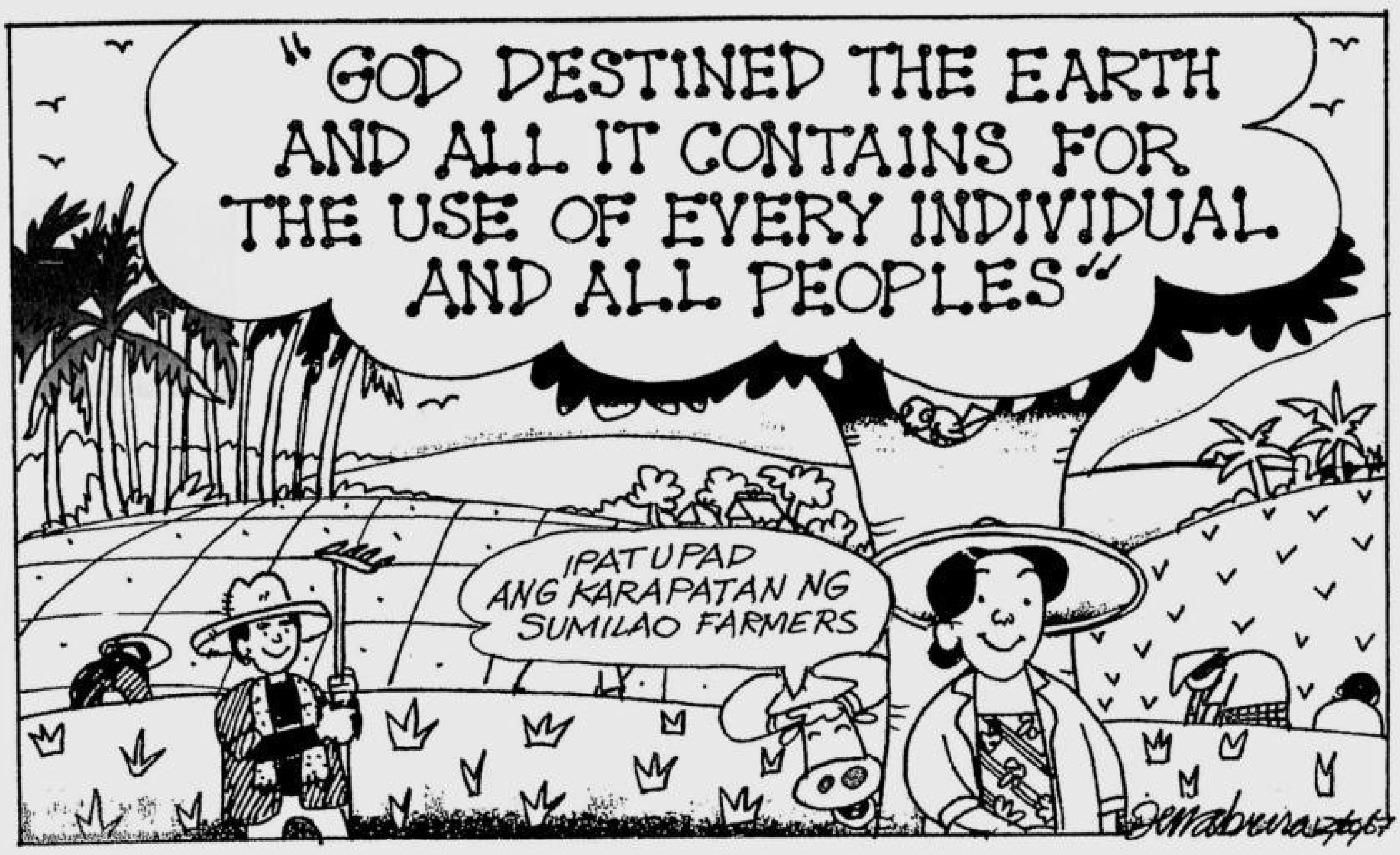
"GOD DESTINED THE EARTH AND ALL IT CONTAINS FOR THE USE OF EVERY INDIVIDUAL AND ALL PEOPLES"
IPATUPAD ANG KARAPATAN NG SUMILAO FARMERS

Wedding rings as visas

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

IN THE BROADWAY PLAY "FIDDLER ON THE roof," three impoverished sisters, in a turn-of-the-century Tsarist Russian village, plead with Yenta: "Matchmaker ... find me a catch/And make me a perfect match."

Yenta would feel at home in Philippines 2007. An "international marriage market" is bustling here, says a Commission on Filipinos Overseas study. Wedding rings are visas out of grinding penury. Some 309,745 Filipinos married foreigners, within an 18-year span. Nine out of 10 (92 percent) were brides.

This market could "further expand (this) decade," according to Minda Valencia and Myra Ramos of CFO, with demographer Nimfa Ogena, in their paper on marriage migration. The Overseas Foreign Workers Journalism Consortium circulated a study summary.

Some spouses-to-be admit that marrying foreigners "is the easiest ticket for possible overseas work and settlement overseas," the Consortium's Jeremaiah Opiniano wrote. Marriage of convenience also provides income for families locked into poverty.

Last year, 24,904 marriages to foreigners were registered—up from 21,100 the previous year. Destinations for the brides, and occasional groom, in 2006 were: United States—10,190; Japan—8,601; Canada—988; United Kingdom—619. These countries screen out marriages of convenience.

An Asian marriage migration trend is surging, Valencia, Ramos and Ogena point out. The rise in the number of Filipinas flying to Taiwan, Japan and South Korea is "significant." CFO data from 1995 to 2004 show more Filipinas marrying nationals of these three East Asian countries.

Brides tend to be younger and less educated than their foreign spouses. "There is a rising number of Filipino women marrying Asian nationals nearly thrice their age," Opiniano wrote. As Yenta sang: "Hodel—I made a match for you./ He's handsome. He's young./All right, he's 62./ But he's a good catch. True? True."

That's light-hearted Broadway. But it shows two different worlds collide when young Filipinas, often from remote barangays, pair up with elderly foreigners, says Philippine Studies. In 1999, the Ateneo University quarterly analyzed psychological fallout from 20,164 Filipino-Japanese marriages over five years.

"The Filipino wife was not prepared for the set-up in the Japanese household, of the obedience expected by her-in laws," wrote University of the Philippines' Leslie Buazon. There's a flipside. "The Japanese were unprepared for the independent spirit of the foreigner wife."

With Angelica Escalona, Buazon studied marriages in a farming village on northeast Honsho Island. In the 1980s, foreign brides started streaming into Yamagata. Most were Koreans and Chinese, followed by Filipinas from Manila, Bataan, Cavite, Bicol, Leyte.

As in other countries, the young flood into cities. This leaves villages like Yamagata with skewed sex ratios. Many males above 30 can't find a spouse. Most seek out local Yentas for matchmaking.

In Yamagata, most marriages were brokered through mail. Cyberspace has replaced Yenta, the CFO study shows. Filipinas now meet foreign spouses through mobile phones. Internet-based chatting leads to wedding rings. Often, there's an overseas relative eager to sub for Yenta.

Almost a third of Yamagata brides have gone to college. CFO director Valencia reports that today most of those heading for Japan and Korea are high school graduates and college undergraduates. Overall, educational similarities among Filipino, Taiwanese, Korean and Japanese spouses are "declining."

The Taiwanese spouse often was less educated than the Filipina. They "married up." This was true for half of the 4,862 registered Filipina marriages from 1995 to 2004. But in Japan and Korea, the spouses tended to "marry down."

Marriages of convenience permit overseas migration, which they believe "could dramatically change their lives," Valencia, Ramos and Ogena observed. They reveal "desperate moves of women who would rather risk settling in a foreign land (which they know little about)." Their alternative is coping with "a future life in poverty and/or solitude or loneliness." It also bears a social stigma of being labeled as "non-marriageable."

Thus, Yenta sings to sister Chava: "He's handsome, He's tall./ That is from side to side/ You heard he has a temper/ He'll beat you every night /But only when's he's sober/ So, you're all right."

Not so. Costs can be high. Tokyo data showed that 3,931 of the 10,242 Filipino women divorced their Japanese spouses. In the Yamagata study, most Filipina wives were Catholics but didn't have access to church. Ties to the faith of their fathers weakened. To please in-laws and ensure "harmonious relations," they joined rituals of their Japanese families.

Aside from language barriers, different climate, food, "characteristics peculiar to the Japanese family caused the most stress," Japanese psychiatrist Norohiko Kuwayama noted. Thus, groups like the Good Shepherd sisters run seminars that include tips on "surviving" migration-linked marriages.

Filipina Rita and Japanese Endo use sign language to communicate. Endo has visited the Philippines. Rita will go to Japan as her wedding ring becomes a visa. "I can learn to love Endo," Rita says wistfully.

One hopes so. For this surge in marriages of convenience is at rock bottom an indictment. It condemns rulers whose greed compels Filipinas to play dice, with their deepest human hopes. To reach some measure of a decent life, they must get a visa in their wedding rings. Like Ruth of Scriptures, these Filipinas stand amid the alien grain.

* * *

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Feudal

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

IT WASN'T IN THE MOVIE, BUT THERE'S A scene in the opening of Mario Puzo's "The Godfather" where Don Corleone borrows money from his consigliore to give to a supplicant who has come to him with his problems. It's all for show, of course (money is the last thing the Godfather lacks), but his gesture of borrowing money from a subordinate (and therefore being in his debt) to give to a needful importuner is not lost on the needful importuner. He falls on his knees, kisses the Godfather's hand, and departs. More than any substantial help, it's that gesture that has made the fellow grateful—and loyal—for life.

In activist days, we used to call that style "feudal," which was rampant in this country because it remained feudal in many respects. In the countryside, land was concentrated in the hands of big hacenderos who treated their tenants and sharecroppers the way the manorial lords of Europe did their serfs several centuries ago, holding the power of life and death over them. The parallel with the lord-serf relationship was not exaggerated: In many instances, the *caciques* did pretty much own their tenants body and soul. They were their source of life and death and could decree either fate with impunity.

This relationship was governed not by impassive rules but by personal appeal, not by demand but by supplication, not by justice but by charity. That was the seed from which sprang this country's feudal outlook, shown particularly in the "politics of patronage" or the "politics of personality," one where politicians played the part of landlord to the citizens' tenants. They were the source of beneficence and could dispense or withhold it depending on whether they were pleased or displeased. Indeed, that was the seed from which sprang much of the Filipino's attitudes and values: his proneness to ignore rules and resort to personal appeal, his proneness to rely on connection rather than ability, his proneness to seek gratuity rather than due.

The ultimate lord of the manor or cacique, of course, was the occupant of Malacañang, and it was not uncommon in the past to see farmers troop there to implore the *summum bonum* to send some scrap of blessing their way. Well, there was a more ultimate lord of the manor or cacique then (as now), but he could not be importuned directly, only through the intercession of the saints. The faith bequeathed by the friars is arguably feudal, but that's another story.

I thought I had seen the last of the most resolute displays of feudal practices during Marcos' time (Marcos milked his Godfather role for all it was worth), until I saw that spectacle in Malacañang of GMA regaling the Sumilao farmers with Her Presence early this week.

I never saw it during Cory's time: Unfortunately for her, Cory will always carry the stigma of the Mendiola massacre, when the farmers trooped to Malacañang to demand their due and was met by a hail of bullets. I never saw it during Fidel Ramos' time: At least in style, if not entirely in substance, Ramos struck the most capitalistic pose among the presidents, talking of tigers and dragons, and vowing to put the country at par with the other Southeast Asian countries who were well on their way to being so. And Erap, though the most immersed in feudal culture, *kumparehan, "walang iwanan"* being the bywords of his rule, ironically enough might have been the one who most did something for land reform, putting Horacio Morales in charge of the DAR.

Of course, it was the Sumilao farmers themselves who sought the audience with GMA. Can you blame them? They're desperate, and the desperate will do desperate things, including, as the local saying puts it, cling to a knife. The law, in the form of the DAR, the Supreme Court, and the entire government itself, was stacked against them, even if justice, in the form of the original award to them by DAR of the land they are laying claim to, was on their side. Where law was a cold, impassive, and unyielding force, their President, notwithstanding proof to the contrary, might not. You won't mind going for miracle cures too if you're dying.

GMA did revoke the conversion of the disputed land to industrial land and decreed the original DAR grant of the land to the farmers in the name of land reform be obeyed. What obstacles remain in the path of the farmers (that is just the first step in a journey of a thousand miles), we do not know. But for the nonce government is basking in the glory of a (PR) job well done, something it wasn't able to do with GMA flying to Kuwait to pluck an OFW from the jaws of death (somehow that didn't fly off). But for one moment last Tuesday, I thought I saw Don Corleone personally borrowing money from his consigliore to give to a supplicant.

I'm happy for the farmers and share their joy at getting a gift for Christmas and/or a respite from life's tribulations. Heaven knows no one more badly needs it. But in the end you can't escape the monumental irony of that spectacle, which is a stinging and poignant commentary on our times. The whole point of land reform, for which an entire government department was built, is to end once and for all the sway of feudalism in this country, not just by physically breaking up huge tracts of land and giving land to the tillers but by spiritually breaking the fetters that bind the serf to his lord, the tenant to his master, the weak and powerless to the strong and all-powerful. Yet, if the Sumilao farmers have gotten their due, or part of it, it has only been because of the triumph of charity over justice, gratuity over due, intercession over obligation. It is only because the lord of all lords, *capo di tutti i capi*, has decreed it so. And now they owe.

Feudalism is dead, long live feudalism!

Choosing peace

COMMENTARY

Cielito C. Goño

John J. Carroll Institute on Church and Social Issues

A SUMILAO FARMER RECALLED BEING TOLD he should be happy that agribusiness companies are making the lands of Sumilao productive. In reply, he inquired whether they would be happy if he entered their golf courses to till those lands and make them productive.

This was not a few days ago. This was back in 1990, when I first went to Bukidnon with my boss, the economist Josefina Samson Atienza. The sociologist Jesuit Antonio Ledesma, who is now archbishop of Cagayan de Oro, had asked her to investigate complaints of farmers in Sumilao and Impasug-ong, about their conflicts with some agribusiness companies.

We went all over not only Sumilao but also Impasug-ong, Manolo Fortich and Cagayan de Oro City, talking to all sides. We listened to small farmers, agribusiness executives and non-government organizations (NGOs) alike. We listened to the fiery Antonieta Borra, who was then the provincial agrarian reform officer of Bukidnon, about how she and her team tried to guard agrarian reform beneficiaries against unfair contracts with companies. We talked to Bukidnon Bishop Gaudencio Rosales, now archbishop of Manila, and to the Religious of St. Augustine who lived among the people of Impasug-ong. We dug up accounts of another Jesuit anthropologist, Vincent G. Cullen, and others, of the prior decades of indigenous lumad people's interaction with big agribusiness.

Fast forward to seven years later. It is one evening in late 1997. A bunch of NGOs had a long meeting on land reform issues in our conference room at the Institute on Church and Social Issues at the Ateneo campus, and was just about to call it a day. I do not remember what the meeting was specifically about anymore. All I remember is that as we ended, Paul Paraguya, a community organizer, arrived from Bukidnon to plead with the NGOs for help for the Sumilao farmers.

They were under threat, he said, and were being displaced from the land they were supposed to receive under the government's land reform program. The New People's Army (NPA) had gotten wind of their desperation and offered help. In their despair and isolation, the farmers accepted.

"Foxholes have been dug," Paul related. They wanted help only in making sure that their families were able to eat, while they were manning foxholes and were thus unable to till the land.

I heard the classic debate in whispers and side-comments around me as Paul spoke. The choice between peace and violence as the means for achieving land reform was one for empowered grass-roots groups to make. It was not the place of development agencies and NGOs to dictate or make that choice for the landless.

Sending money for food posed quite a dilemma, though. Saying no would keep this particular group of NGOs in line with their ideals of non-violence. However, this could deepen the isolation and desperation of the farmers, and the NPA would emerge as their main institutional ally.

Saying yes instead could dampen the impact of violence on the food security and social welfare of affected families. However, money sent for food could be spent for bullets and guns, even with the best monitoring efforts. Either way, an NGO could end up unwittingly fueling violence, in effect.

So there it was, a fork in the road. Apparently, a couple of NGOs later decided to release money. The rest moved only to inform and lobby then Executive Secretary Ruben Torres not to overturn the decision of the Department of Agrarian Reform to award the disputed property to the Sumilao farmers.

Torres' action was dismal, but in the process the farmers became aware of a wider ring of support around them. It was this, perhaps, that made them see a more diverse array of options. Apart from the route of violence, the path of peace also lay ahead. Anyone who does not know which course they took when they saw this fork on their road needs only to learn that the farmers went on a much publicized hunger strike the following year, with a wide spectrum of NGOs behind them.

Fast forward again to 10 years later. It is another evening in Ateneo in December 2007. Sumilao farmers, among them the same persons who went on hunger strike in 1998, marched into the biggest church on campus to tumultuous and seemingly unending applause of the packed crowd. Their long walk from their homes in Bukidnon to this other house in Manila tells me that the culture of peace has truly taken root among the Sumilao farmers.

The proponents of violence as a means for land reform and wider social change must be asking: "But what have they got to show for it? The farmers may think they chose a romantic notion of peace, but really have they not only placed their fate in the hands of a government that is unwilling to defend them?"

What signal will Agrarian Reform Secretary Nasser Pangandaman be sending regarding these questions? He has been stressing that the DAR would decide the Sumilao case based on merit, and not on what he describes as emotional drama among the farmers and their supporters. It is hoped that the secretary, a relative newbie to this issue, would realize that any heartbrokenness he does see also springs from a rational comprehension of the merits of this case.

If the land could weep and sing

HUMAN FACE

Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

WELL, WHAT CAN I SAY. WEEPING HAS turned into rejoicing. Day is breaking all over the land. Joy comes in the morning. If there should be weeping, the weeping should let flow tears of joy.

For the farmers of Sumilao, who marched 1,700 kilometers for two months from Bukidnon to Manila under scorching heat and driving rain, are finally seeing a glimmer of hope. That the disputed 144 hectares would be theirs once again, wrenched at last from corporate hands after years of weeping and gnashing of teeth on the part of the farmer-awardees.

But there were will be some waiting to do even after President Macapagal-Arroyo ordered that the land that had been reclassified as agro-industrial be reverted back to agricultural land covered by the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program.

With the backing of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines and civil society groups, but minus the disruptive flag-waving of hard-core ideological elements, the farmers should be on their way back to their promised land.

Nine years ago, I wrote the column piece below. I fished it out from my files some days ago when I thought the Sumilao case would again turn awry, because for a while it looked that way. Anyway, here it is as a remembrance of things past and I hope I never have to rub it in again.

* * *

If the land could weep, it would weep rivers. It would not weep for those who fawn and faint over it, or for those who fling themselves on it while frenziedly clutching straw and stones to throw at each other and the darkening sky. What a shame. If the land could grieve, it would grieve for itself.

If the land could weep, it would weep for itself. It would not weep for the whining people who call themselves rightful landowners, who call themselves heirs to the yawning vastness simply because their fathers begot them and their mothers writhed in pain to push them out of the darkness of their hemorrhaging wombs. For why should the land waste its tears on those who have not grasped the meaning of land, the essence of the earth whence they sprang?

If the land could weep, it would weep for itself. It would not weep for those who spend precious time, talent and treasure in order to claim, reclaim and proclaim ownership of that which is supposed to be eternally ownerless. For as a slain sage had said, "How can you own that which will outlive you?"

If the land could weep, it would not weep for those who lose much sleep deciding whose side they should take on the issue of who must till the land and make it yield flower and fruit. For why must they be sleepless and go around displaying the bags under their eyes when it has been written somewhere that a certain class of people, blessed and poor they are called, are just as qualified to inherit the earth?

If the land could weep, it would weep for itself. It would not weep for those who warm benches and sit hunched on their desks, figuring out how to dispense justice based on precise legal points and technicalities. Their brand of justice, if dictated by a thousand books alone, would be as nothing, it would be only as useful as the straw is for the bonfire. It bursts into a blinding blaze and then is no more. For why waste tears on those who work hard and earn good money, who think of themselves redeemed by their worship of the law?

If the land could weep, it would weep for itself. It would not weep for those whose grand plans for the land are stalled and who panic over the possible demise of their dreams because there exist people who need a share, who have simple plans and simple dreams. It would not grieve their possible loss for nothing could possibly be lost.

If the land could weep, it would not weep for the government officials who play God and preside over the fate of the land and its tillers, who overturn just decisions to favor the rich and mock the poor. It would not weep over the festering sores on their souls and the rudeness of their actions. It would not cry out for their redemption, but neither would it weep over its damnation.

If the land could weep, it would not weep for the hungry landless who make themselves hungrier still with their protests. For why weep for them when tears are not what they need? What they need is the justice of God and the justice of Her creatures. For as someone has said: "It is by justice that we bring together the broken, neglected, cut-off, impoverished parts of the universe to render them whole again."

If the land could weep, it would weep for itself because people are killing each other for it, spilling blood and guts on it, defiling it with their foul spit. It would weep rivers because its rivers have become as dry as the soul of those who claim ownership of it by virtue of words written on paper.

It would weep because they stick iron rods on pregnant fields in order that they may yield more, more—not succulent fruit and fragrant flower—but more money. Because they do not get it. Because they build fences and enclosures to ward off the so-called wretched of the land who want a little share.

If the land in Sumilao could weep, it would weep for itself and the Mapalad farmers whose rejoicing quickly turned into despair when the Supreme Court nullified the Ramos "win-win solution" that would have given the farmers a just share of a disputed land. It would weep because the decision would pave the way for the conversion of productive agricultural land to a non-agricultural estate...

* * *

With their imminent victory, the farmers should march home singing, "And heaven and nature sing, And heaven and nature sing..." If the land could sing, it would sing, "Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace to all humankind."

* * *

Send feedback to cerespd@info.com.ph

Happiness is a ham

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

DOROTHY PARKER ONCE QUIPPED, "ETERNITY is a ham and two people."

I don't know about her, but happiness, for me, is a holiday ham. There is something particularly pleasing about being gifted with a ham; and I don't think I am alone in thinking this. Companies or offices that make ham-giving an annual part of their holiday ritual seem to especially please their employees.

The pleasure has nothing to do with the quality of the ham. A few years ago, when I was still working at Malacañang, everyone received, aside from the annual sack of rice, a ham. It was a truly lousy ham, the kind that, if you squeezed it, would give off as much water as your average sponge. A testament to the kind of ham-making that has more to do with injections than it does curing a piece of pork.

But that didn't stop people from whooping it up upon receipt of the ham, which one veteran government employee told me was due to the ham being quite acceptable, once thoroughly fried. If I recall correctly, Palace employees went home early that day, as the hams began to drip. And even as most employees licked their chops in anticipation of gorging on their hams, a few indulged in something hams tend to inspire: nostalgia.

An official, watching her staff clucking over their hams, reminisced that in the good old days of the first Macapagal administration, life was simpler. How? she was asked. Well, she replied, fondly, in those days, luxury in the Palace was a slice of ham served to guests. Younger officials looked at her blankly.

An uncle used to go to Chinatown whenever the holiday season began to look for the perfect Chinese ham. They had to be the right age and not too salty. They also had to be the right weight, and it seemed part of his annual ham-buying involved the joys of quarreling with the vendors.

He would recount his spotting infinite variations of customers being gypped, which naturally proved that he was too clever by far to be cheated. (The cheating apparently involved trying to slip in bones if you bought slices, so that you paid for less ham; or trying to fob off moldy hams to gullible customers, and so on).

The perfect Chinese ham having been procured, it would then be displayed with great pride, but the real pleasure was not in its preparation (the ritual washings) or in consuming it sliced, but waiting until the guests went home, at which point the ham scraps would be boiled with noodles to make a truly unforgettable *mami*.

Another uncle once quipped that it was the holiday pride in ham that was the origin of the word "*hambog*," which I actually believed until the other elders finally broke out in laughter.

I eventually observed that their preference for Chinese ham was part of a bias they held against sweet food, a sign, one of my uncles solemnly intoned during one holiday lunch, of a general deterioration in my generation's tastes. Not that it was precisely the fault of young people, but rather, a reflection of the sad deterioration of the country, when, in the 1970s, such abominations as sweet spaghetti gained currency as desperate housewives began to experiment on extenders to decrease the cost of holiday foods.

I reckon that most of us, though, prefer our ham fatty and sweet. One holiday ham ration I received this year came vacuum packed, essentially a ham swimming in a sugary kind of brine, complete with packets of sauce that advertised their main ingredients as sugar and pineapple juice. The ham itself seems to be a combination of three parts ham and one part ham fat, but it is one of the most popular holiday hams and, once taken out of its plastic cocoon, and baked and basted with the pre-made sauce, is quite tasty indeed.

There is no substitute, though, for the traditional ham, of which Majestic ham is truly the pinnacle of perfection (and represents the summit, in terms of ham prices). I don't know anyone, though, who has ever been given a Majestic ham—everyone seems to save up to buy a piece of it. I have received, however, a truly splendid "bone-in" ham, which, although made in far larger commercial quantities than the Majestic kind (which in other countries would be called an artisan ham, I guess), is indisputably what it claims to be: a real ham, from the hindquarters of a pig.

The good thing about a holiday ham is that you can set it aside, and concentrate on consuming other holiday foods. The ham, true to its nature as a preserved food, will happily wait for you and not spoil. It suits our national instinct to hoard quite admirably.

It is versatile, too: suitable for slicing, dicing, frying, baking, and boiling, and it goes with practically every meal.

It is the gift that gives on giving. You can think of the person(s) who gave you the ham, with fondness and gratitude, in late January and March, even as you've ended up cursing all the other kind souls that gave you food for Christmas, but who ended up conspiring to horribly expand your waistline, contributing to the post-holiday blues. A ham, in contrast, is less obviously bad for you than, say, food for the gods. It may clog your arteries, but it doesn't obviously make you bloat.

Of course, all gifts should be appreciated, but when it comes to the happiness that ham in general inspires, there are specific kinds of ham that seem unable to inspire the proper kind of holiday spirit. I refer to canned hams, and those so-called "pear-shaped" hams, which may be wonders of food processing as sculpture, but which are tasteless, and so processed that you're probably better off eating Spam or Ma-Ling, even though they're as much ham as cereals. (The communists, true to form, are blunt about it: Ma-Ling for one, is manufactured by the appropriately socialist-named "China National Cereals, Oils And Foodstuffs Corporation," recently blandly renamed COFCO).

So here's to the real star of our holidays: the pig!

Countdown to Christmas

YOUNG BLOOD

Jamie Faith A. Tan

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

FOR SOME ODD REASON, IT IS NOT MY BIRTHDAYS BUT Christmases that make me feel a year more mature. The countdown to Christmas starts as early as September, which is also just about the same time when I start feeling a little bit more grown up.

What's Christmas without people roaming around, singing carols and spreading the holiday spirit to everyone? When I was younger, I used to watch other kids and adults caroling. This brought me the realization that kids aren't taken as seriously as adults, maybe because the adults got more cash or just cash while the children got sweets in exchange for singing their lungs out.

That made me wish that I would grow up faster. I thought that when I got older I would be happier because then I would be able to do the things that I wanted.

As a little girl, I wished to have such freedom. But now that I am a young woman preoccupied with lots of different tasks and opportunities, I ask myself: Does freedom diminish over time? Do we actually have more freedom as we grow or did we have more when we were younger? I ask these questions because I am quite confused that I still cannot do all the things that I really want to do, like go to beaches as much as I want to, hang out with friends, enroll in a gym, read a good book or just sleep, because a huge chunk of my time is given to things that I need to do, not to things that I desire to do.

This is where I learn that time is always there. And when you say, "I have no time," that is all crap. Time is always available; it is we who make it unavailable for certain things because we choose to devote it to something "urgent."

Funny how some kids wish to grow old as fast as possible just so they could experience what it is like to make each and every word they utter sound meaningful, while some adults wish to stop time just so they could in some way or another renew the blissful feeling of foolishly goofing around with lollipops filling their cheeks.

Every episode in our life opens different opportunities and closes certain chances, both of which can expand our understanding of the world around us. As we gradually move to another chapter in our life, new horizons open for us and we leave certain spheres behind us. We begin to discover new priorities and embrace them as much as we can. But sometimes, we long for those sweet, light moments we had when we were younger just so we could feel less pressured.

Time really flies so that it seems unnoticeable. One moment I wish to be 20, and the next moment I wish to be 15 again. One more year and off I go to begin another chapter in my life. One more year and gone are my teenage years. I look back at all the years I have lived, trying to decipher each of the experiences, choices and actions I have taken. Many I am proud of but I would not deny that some were repulsive. Nonetheless, I never really loathe any of them. I know that each of them has contributed to making me a stronger individual and essentially establishing who I am today.

Though Christmases make me feel grown-up every time, I love it when they approach. I guess what is interesting about the season is that every time it comes around, no matter what I do, regardless of the extra age I feel I have gained, I always get the same feeling. Just the thought of Christmas trees taking hold of those distinct spots in every home makes me shiver in anticipation. I look forward to the days when darkness comes as early as five in the afternoon and the cool breeze strokes my skin. All this makes me feel really good.

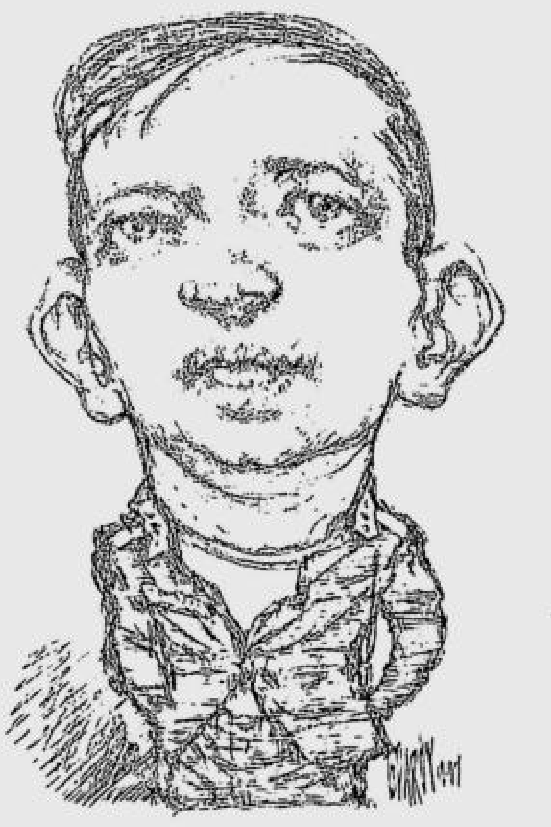
Christmas is my time for reflection. It is during this period that I gauge myself and take stock of my actions. If there is one important thing that I learn every year, it is to make every moment count because time wasted can never be regained. Sure, heartaches may come with the risks we take and may even capture a big part of our lives, but healing is a process every person must be willing to take. There is no sense in becoming a prisoner of the future by fearing things that have yet to happen nor is there a reason to be a prisoner of the past by dwelling so much and feeling guilty over mistakes we have committed. Though life is never fair, it is easy to live it fairly by following our hearts and by being fair to ourselves and to others as well. If we do, everything else will follow.

Jamie Faith A. Tan, 19, is a third year BS Management student at Ateneo de Manila University.

NOTICE TO YOUNGBLOOD CONTRIBUTORS:

Send your contributions by e-mail to youngblood@inquirer.com.ph together with your address, age and the school, course and year you're enrolled in or, if employed, the position you're holding and the company you work with. Contributions to Youngblood should not have been previously published.

IN THE NEWS



Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV

Interesting 'perceptions' by gov't

WHEN I READ IN THE PAPERS that President Macapagal-Arroyo herself and Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, Rep. Arthur Defensor and other GMA defenders dismissed as mere "perceptions" the recent Pulse Asia survey indicating that Filipinos consider GMA and her administration the most corrupt ever, I had to run to the dictionary to look up again the meaning of the word "perception."

Perhaps, all these years, I had been using "perceive" and "perception" in an erroneous context. If so, my elementary and high school teachers must have been either too lenient with me or had a good laugh behind my back. For I remember having used either word at one time or another in essay or theme writing in the sense I understood them to mean. At that time of my life, I considered those two words quite erudite and thought they would certainly impress my teachers.

Now, I am disturbed; for over 60 years, I had been an ignoramus. For going by what GMA and her cohorts say, learned as they all are, what one "perceives" is, by implication, not really true. Me, I had thought all the while that "perception" is the knowledge obtained through the senses. And I had trusted my senses all along.

However, with my newfound knowledge about the new nuances in the meaning of "perceive" and "perception," as propounded by GMA and company, I am now reassured that all that my senses have been telling me about what is happening in this country are not really true. For a long time now, I have been lamenting the "perceived" corruption, evasion of responsibility, non-transparency, etc. of the people in the Arroyo administration. Now, I am reassured that these "perceptions" are mere illusions. The following therefore are mere "perceptions" (read: illusions) in the new meaning of the word.

1. GMA promised in front of the statue of Rizal that she would not run for reelection in 2004.

2. GMA won the elections fair and square in 2004 (according to herself.;

3. Nobody helped Joc-Joc Bolante to escape abroad to avoid prosecution.

4. Erap is innocent (according to himself).

5. The GTE, NorthRail, Diosdado Macapagal Boulevard, Transco bidding and other reported government anomalies are all above board.

6. The Ombudsman is doing her level best in going after grafters in the government (according to herself).

7. Human rights violations, extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances are being investigated.

8. The economy has improved tremendously and people have now more money to buy commodities at continually increasing prices and it is possible that in time, one would need a basketful of pesos to buy a kilo of rice—just like during the Japanese occupation when the country was awash with "Mickey Mouse money."

I could go on endlessly with a lot of sundry "perceptions" but I "perceive" I am getting confused and absurd.

—JESUS V. LANUZA,
mama_lindsy@yahoo.com

Where gov't failed in Pen takeover

RE MANUEL L. QUEZON III'S column "War freaks." (INQUIRER, 12/3/07) I don't think one of our traits as a people is our tendency to kick a man when he is down.

The hooting took place after the government had proclaimed victory? There was hooting right after that but it didn't mean there was none before Antonio Trillanes IV surrendered. The Peninsula Manila takeover was doomed before it was hatched—with or without the man with a wig—because the majority of the Filipino people are already discerning enough not to allow military rule in this country.

The police limited their bullying to unarmed civilians from the media? Media people are not supposed to be armed. The funny thing is media can bully armed policemen by claiming they are just doing their job and that they have all the right and freedom to do their job as they wish, regardless of others who need to do their job as well.

Now, who are the war freaks? Lito Lapid and Bong Revilla have nothing to show in the Senate? Miriam Defensor-Santiago a lunatic? Miguel Zubiri not having a mandate of 11 million votes? Now, who indeed are the war freaks who ferociously demanded blood and wanted to end it all in an ocean of blood?

Maybe, the government is rightly to be blamed—it should have capitulated to Trillanes' wishes or it should not have reacted to Trillanes' belligerence.

The government was asking for blood, maybe; and Trillanes provided it with a very good opportunity to spill it. And the government failed to seize the moment.

—DIOSDADO FRANCO,
dongfranco@yahoo.com

Consuelo Alger's maternal lineage

IN MY RECENT COMMENTARY "A WOMAN named Consuelo" (INQUIRER, 12/12/07), I wrote that Consuelo Alger was a Zobel on her paternal line and an Ayala on her mother's side. This is incorrect.

Consuelo was the daughter of Enrique Zobel de Ayala and Fermina Montojo, his second wife. He had remarried after his first wife, Consuelo Roxas de Ayala, died after seven years of their marriage.

Doña Mercedes Zobel McMicking was Consuelo's half-sister, being the daughter of Enrique Zobel de Ayala by his first marriage.

Many thanks to Vicky Garchitorena of Ayala Foundation, with whom I checked this matter and who in turn checked with Maritoni Ortigas, director of the Filipinas Heritage Library.

—BELINDA A. AQUINO,
professor and director
of Philippine Studies,
University of Hawaii at Manoa

Victims' kin recall MV Doña Paz sinking

TODAY, DEC. 20, WE COMMEMORATE THE 20th death anniversary of my loved ones and those who perished in the world's worst sea tragedy of all time, the sinking of MV Doña Paz.

Twenty long years of missed memories with the death of my parents and sister. As my family recalls to mind their untimely demise, most of the Filipino people are busy preparing for Christmas.

This is not only a time to remember but also a time to give homage to God Almighty for all the blessings He has showered upon us.

Again, a blessed Christmas to everyone!

—MAITA ESPINA-ABUNALES,
Block 1, Lot 41, Celina Royale Subdivision,
Bayanan, Bacoor, Cavite

Zubiri denies facilitating Quisumbing-SMFI deal

LAST DEC. 8, 2007, I CAME UPON SOLITA Monsod's column on the snail-paced implementation of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program and the the plight of the Sumilao farmers who walked from Bukidnon to Malacañang in order to amplify their claim to a 144-hectare property in Sumilao, Bukidnon. Monsod talked about how the land was unjustly converted by its previous owner, Norberto Quisumbing, into an agro-industrial estate, and the fact that the land is now owned by San Miguel Foods Inc.

Monsod mentioned me in her column.

During the time that the land was converted by the previous owner, I was not yet the governor of Bukidnon province. It was then Gov. Carlos Fortich who supported Quisumbing on the conversion. In fact, if Monsod would care to interview the original claimants, she would be told that I even supported them financially when they traveled to Quezon City and conducted a hunger strike. My support for the farmers and the impoverished was never in question.

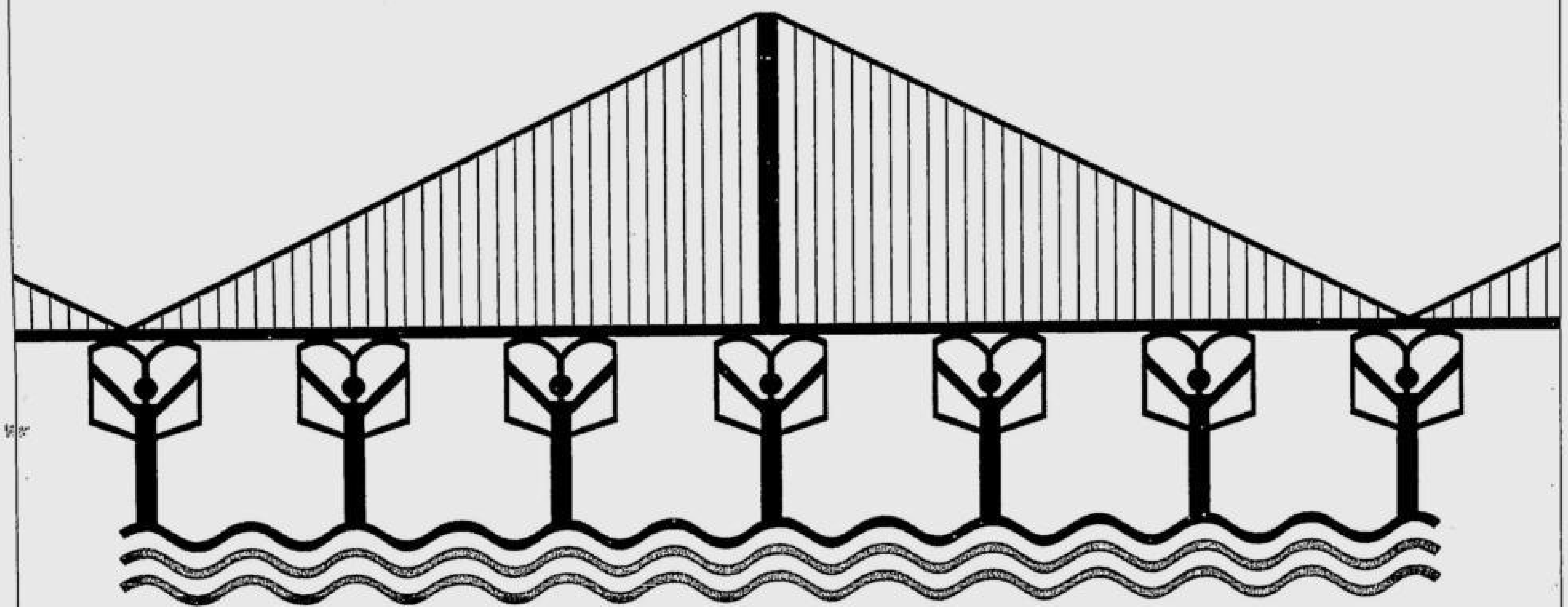
It thus pained me to read in her column this allegation: "Here's the kicker: Q does not do anything toward conversion (at least as far as DAR inspection shows). What he does is sell the land to SMFI [San Miguel Foods Inc.] in 2002 (within the five-year period) allegedly for a very pretty penny, the transaction allegedly facilitated by Bukidnon Gov. Jose Zubiri (this is the grave-robbing analogy)."

The inaccurate, baseless and malicious statements of Monsod which likened me to a grave robber was very insulting to my person. Monsod should have checked her facts first before making that defamatory claim.

I came to know of the intention of SMFI to purchase land in Bukidnon because its officials paid me, as the provincial governor, a courtesy visit and told me that they were planning to buy a property in the province, to which they would transfer their feed mill, cannery plant and hog farm from Bulacan. I was told by the mayor of Sumilao that the Quisumbing property in that town was for sale. I immediately relayed the information to SMFI.

For the record, I did not even personally know Quisumbing during that time. Quisumbing and SMFI dealt with each other and consummated the transaction directly without my participation. I had no information during that time that the farmers were clamoring for the cancellation of the conversion order. Monsod can check with the farmers themselves on this matter. I have always believed that she will not hesitate to correct misimpressions created in her columns.

—JOSE MA. R. ZUBIRI JR.



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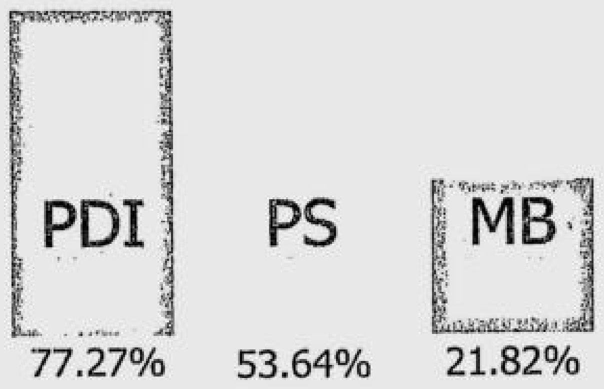

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NBI widens search for mayor who took son in custody war

By Carla P. Gomez
Inquirer Visayas

BACOLOD CITY—THE NATIONAL BUREAU OF Investigation has launched a nationwide search for Pulupandan Mayor Magdaleno Peña and his 3-year-old son who disappeared after the mayor was ordered by the Supreme Court to return the child to his mother, actress and TV host Marie Roxanne "Plinky" Recto.

NBI Bacolod chief Mamerto Cortez said the local offices and the NBI in the National Capital Region have been ordered to locate Peña and the child.

The NBI has been ordered to take the child from the mayor after the Supreme Court, ruling on a two-year custody battle between erstwhile lovers Peña and Recto over the child, issued a decision dated Dec. 3 that gave the child's temporary custody to his mother.

Cortez said NBI agents searched Peña's house in Barangay Ubay, Pulupandan, Negros Occidental on Tuesday but they could not find him.

The NBI was informed that Peña stopped reporting at the Pulupandan municipal hall since Dec. 10 but filed for an official leave last Monday, Dec. 17.

Peña was, however, reached through his cellular phone by the INQUIRER yesterday but he refused to disclose his location, except to say that he and his son were "out of the country."

"My son and I are out of the country. We'll be back after our vacation and we'll go to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court is on recess anyway and we'll be back to work in January," he said.

However, Peña would not say when he would bring the boy back and if it will be before Christmas.

"I am doing this to fight for the rights of men to be with their children. Hopefully, I can draw the attention of lawmakers and the Supreme Court to the situation where just because the parents have a disagreement, the children are deprived of their father and the fathers are deprived of their children. This is contrary to natural law and the Constitution," he said.

Recto's lawyer, Evalyn Ursua, in an interview over ANC Tuesday, said Peña as a lawyer should follow the SC order or he may be cited for contempt.

Panel formed to probe Asean summit scams in Cebu

By Jolene R. Bulambot
Inquirer Visayas

CEBU CITY—THE VISAYAS Ombudsman has created a panel of investigators to look into the alleged stray projects that got funding from the budget for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) summit held in Cebu early this year.

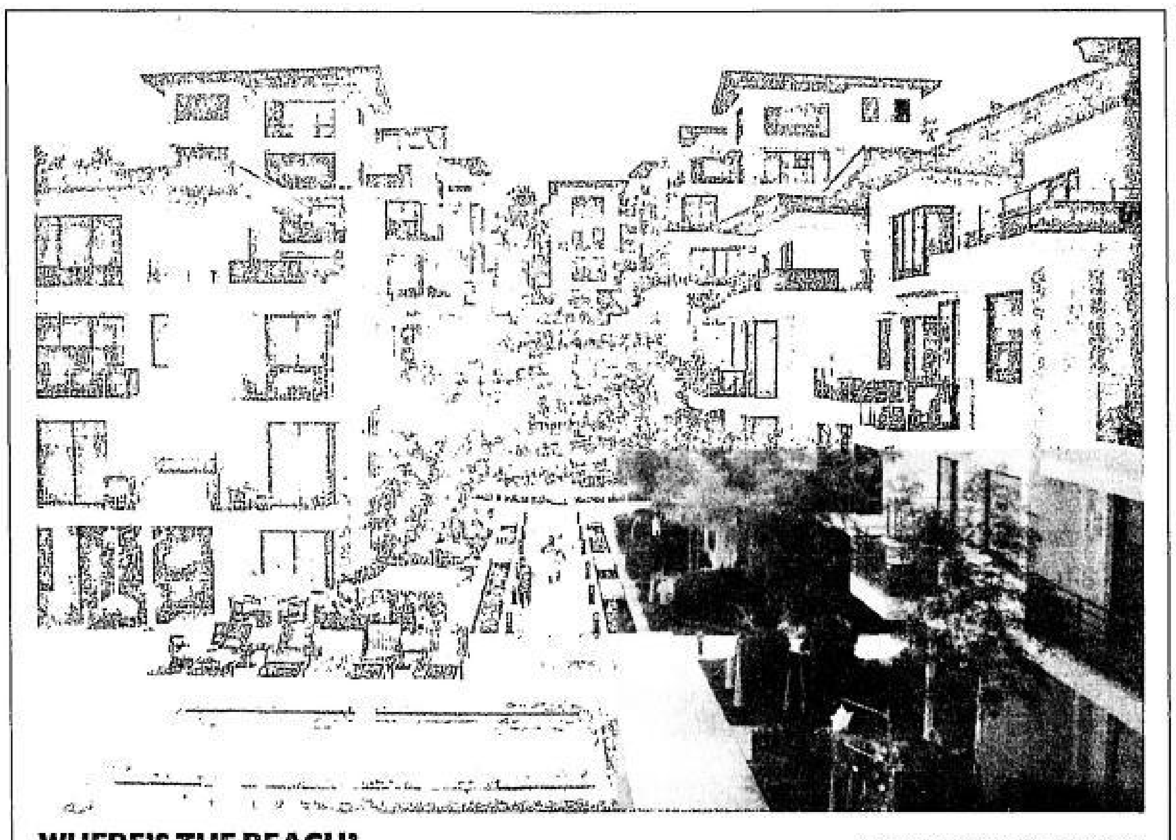
Deputy Ombudsman Pelagio Apostol said the panel's task is to find out if there was an irregularity committed in the implementation of the road rehabilitation projects, which were intended for the Asean summit preparation.

Apostol said the antigraft office is coordinating with the Commission on Audit (COA) in conducting the fact-finding inquiry over alleged anomalous transactions involving Asean-related projects.

Assistant deputy Ombudsman Virginia Palanca-Santiago will head the panel, he said.

"We will look into it but we won't comment if the transaction was regular or irregular because it will be preempting our inquiry. We will consider the findings of the COA on whether there is a need to elevate our inquiry to formal charges," Pelagio said.

The COA found almost P200 million of the P2 billion budget given to the Department of Public Works and Highways for Asean-related projects was used by DPWH for road projects in areas that did not host the summit, including one in the island province of Siquijor.



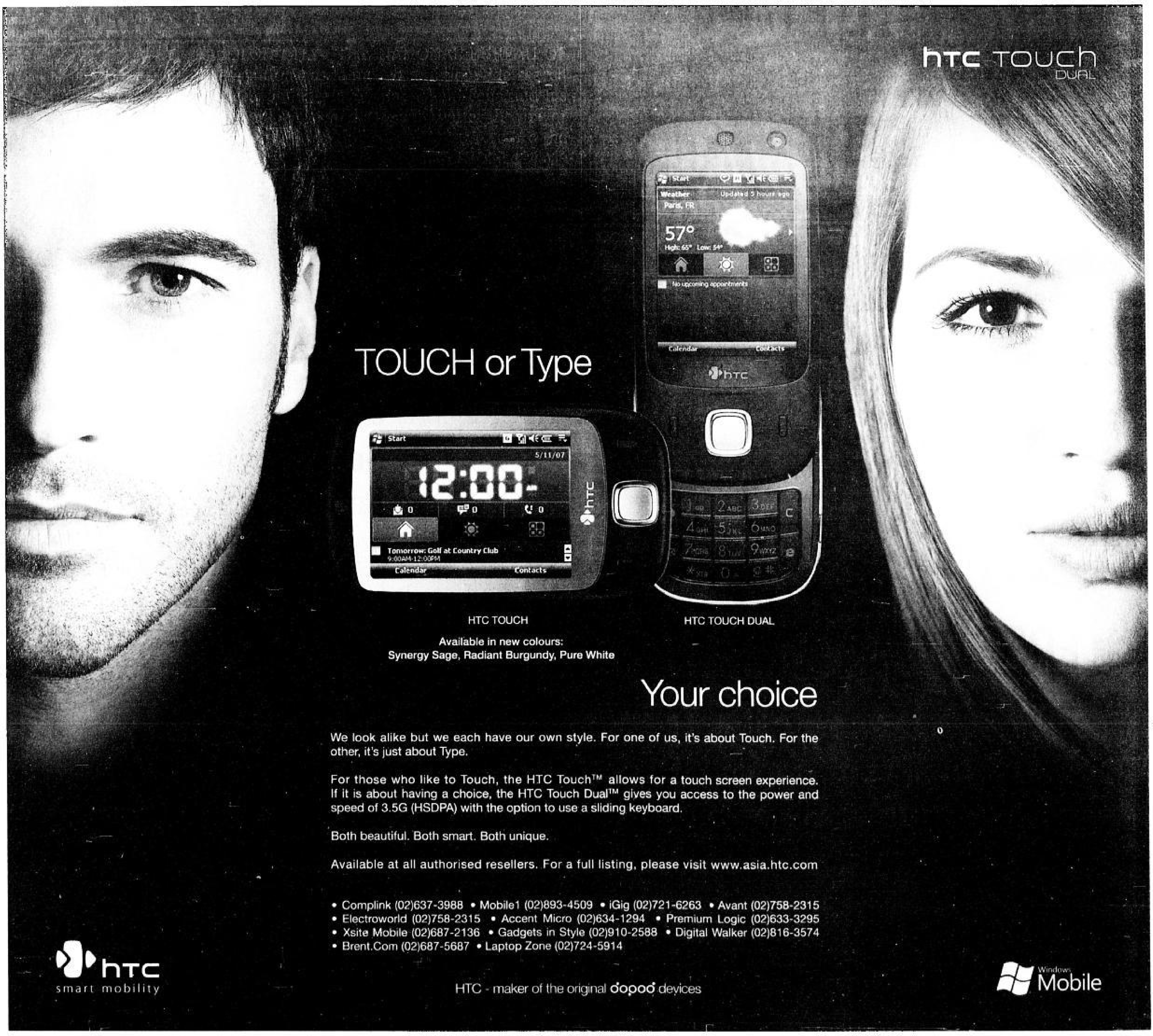
WHERE'S THE BEACH? NESTOR BURGOS JR./INQUIRER VISAYAS
The rapid rise of structures, buildings, condominiums and hotels near the shores of Boracay is gobbling up pieces of land in the resort island.

Loser in barangay elections shot dead

ROXAS CITY—A LOSING CANDIDATE for barangay chair in the special barangay elections held in a remote village in a Capiz town was killed, one was wounded and another escaped when they were ambushed by a group of armed men in Barangay Mabini, Tapaz, Capiz on Tuesday morning.

Tapaz police Chief Insp. Diomedes Cuadra Jr. identified the fatality as Ronilo Eulalio, who lost when he ran in the special barangay elections for Barangay Rizal Norte, Tapaz last Saturday.

Helen Artuz, 38, wife of a former barangay councilor of the same barangay, was wounded while her husband Wilfredo was not hit, Cuadra said. *Felipe V. Celino, Inquirer Visayas*



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Troops, MILF clash after rebs retreat from talks

ZAMBOANGA CITY—CLASHES between government soldiers and Moro gunmen broke out days after the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front pulled back from peace talks with the government on territorial issues.

Maj. Eugene Batara, spokesperson of the Western Mindanao Command, said two soldiers were killed while five others were wounded when Marines clashed with members of the Abu Sayyaf, a terrorist group suspected of having ties with the MILF.

The gunmen were led by Nuruddin Muddalang and Furuji Indama, according to Batara.

Batara said the 3 p.m. encounter in Barangay Bohe Suyak in Unkaya Pukan town on Tuesday lasted for three hours.

Brig. Gen. Juancho Sabban, commander of Task Force Thunder based in Basilan, said two Abu Sayyaf men were killed in the encounter.

MILF is target

But Sattar Alih, MILF representative in the team monitoring a ceasefire agreement, said the dead were not Abu Sayyaf members, but MILF guerrillas.

Alih said the military bombarded an MILF camp in Tipo-Tipo town, not in Unkaya Pulan.

"The bombs fired by the Marines landed on the Bangsamoro Development Army building," he said.

Tipo-Tipo Councilor Musiddik Mande supported Salih's claim. He said government troops positioned themselves in Sumisip, Albarka and Unkaya Pukan, surrounding the camp of MILF Commander Hamsan Sapanton in Sitio Maluha in the village of Baguindan in Tipo-Tipo.

Alih also said the firing lasted until 6 a.m. on Wednesday, not 6 p.m. on Tuesday as claimed by the military.

Evacuation

In Pikit, North Cotabato, at least 300 families were displaced as government militias and suspected MILF rebels clashed on Tuesday.

Also on that day, President Macapagal-Arroyo said she wanted the peace process to continue, but Eid Kabalu, civilian relations chief of the MILF, said "it will be difficult to move on if they continue to insist to work within the framework of the Constitution."

The MILF on Dec. 15 called off the talks after government negotiators inserted into a draft agreement on ancestral domain the phrase "constitutional process" as the mode for the agreement's enforcement.

The government wants the Bangsamoro Juridical Entity, the proposed MILF homeland, subjected to a plebiscite.

MILF chief Ibrahim Murad said the insistence of the government on constitutional processes would prolong the Bangsamoro's agony and the situation could blow up into a full-scale war.

Prayer

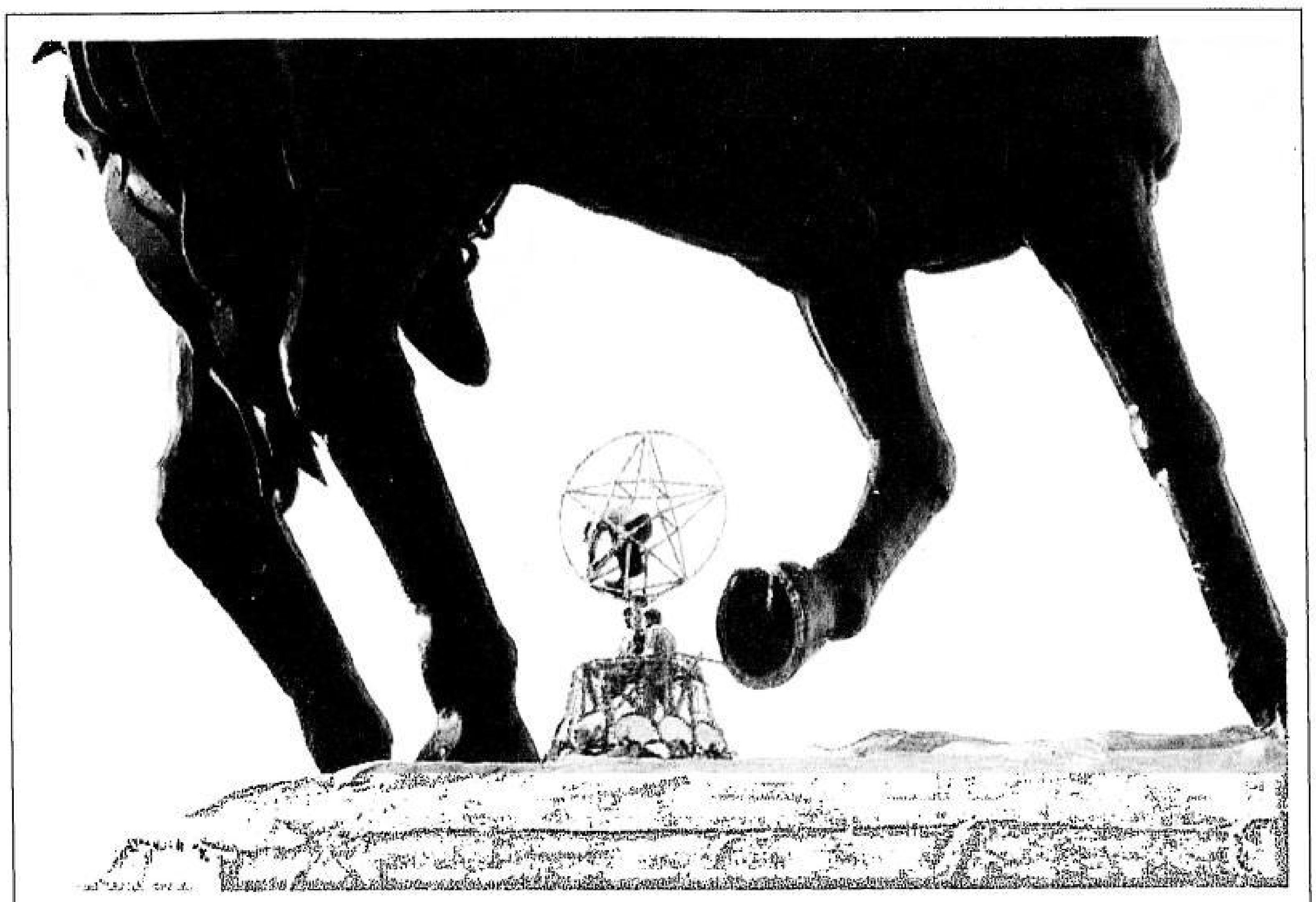
"May Allah help us free ourselves from the colonial oppression and injustice and regain our freedom in order that we will be able to rejoin the community of nations that upholds justice and peace," Murad said.

He earlier blamed officials in government as those responsible for the snag in the talks in Kuala Lumpur. Some officials, he said, were out to sabotage the peace process.

Marines backed by air strikes killed at least six Moro gunmen suspected of involvement in an attack on a US supply helicopter.

Separately, an Egyptian suspected of being a bomb expert was arrested early on Wednesday in a raid on an Islamic women's residence in Cotabato City.

Acting on a tipoff from residents, a team of police and Army personnel retrieved explosives, detonating devices, and an MILF manual. *Julie S. Alipala and Jeoffrey Maitem, Inquirer Mindanao with a report from Reuters*



PLAY AREA
Children play while workers fix a giant star at the provincial capitol of Cavite.
PHOTOGRAPH BY ROMY VITUG

Man who claimed he's Marcos son is in jail

BAGUIO CITY—THE "DEAD" man, who allegedly duped prospective US migrants into paying him over P2 million in 2005, has turned up alive in a jail here.

Stephen Chua's victims asked the police's Criminal Investigation and Detection Group this week to revive the case it pursued against him,

Chua had offered to facilitate the migration of 38 people to the United States after claiming to be a son of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

Beverly Somera, one of victims, said Chua had been in jail since 2006 under a different name because of another fraud case.

Somera said she confronted Chua and got a sample of his signature.

"But he kept insisting that he was not Chua," she said, although the man she claimed to be Chua agreed to sign a promissory note that he would return Somera's P500,000 that was paid to Amazing World Consultancy and General Services.

Chua was supposedly the president of the consultancy firm that operated in the city until 2003.

Court officials asked the INQUIRER to keep confidential the identity of the man Somera claimed to be Chua, to avoid disrupting the hearing of the case.

Police have also reserved comment until they can verify Somera's allegations.

In an affidavit, two sisters who sued Amazing World four years ago said they gave the firm P200,000 as processing fee so they could land jobs in the United States and Canada.

They were later told that the money would pay for Chua's transaction with a supposed American contact at the US Embassy, who promised to fast-track the processing of their visas.

All of the victims were asked to meet Chua or the firm's representatives in Metro Manila on what should have been their scheduled flight to the United States, Somera said.

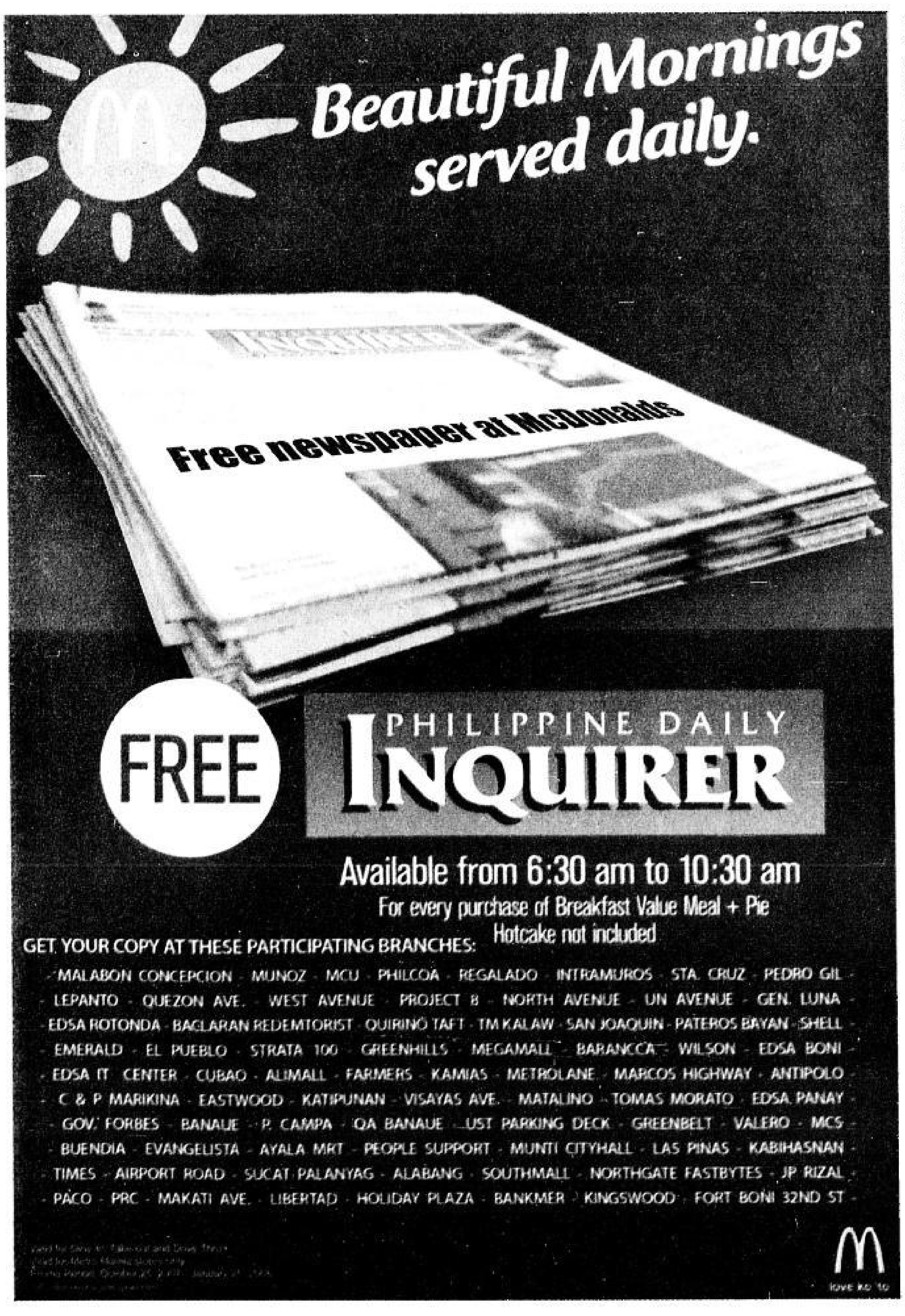
But they were met instead by company employees who showed them a handwritten letter purportedly announcing Chua's death.

Chua supposedly died from a lingering kidney and liver disease at a hospital in Los Angeles, California.

The letter asked the clients to return to Metro Manila on a later date so the firm could remit their fees and return their passports.

It claimed that Chua's will had declared the transfer of a quarter of his estate to the firm and a foundation.

"Do not try to communicate with us.... We are in mourning," a portion of the letter said. *Vincent Cabreza, Inquirer Northern Luzon*



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Isafp man captured by rebels freed soon

TAGUM CITY—AN agent of the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (Isafp), who was abducted by communist guerrillas in Compostela Valley over three months ago, would soon be released and returned to his family, a local official acting as negotiator said.

Monkayo Vice Mayor Avelino Cabag said the new development also belied reports that Sgt. Frederick Gaila had already been executed by the rebels.

He said the communist leadership in the province was only waiting for a letter of appeal from Gaila's family before deciding on Gaila's release.

"The family of Sgt. Frederick Gaila can appeal to the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA) central committee for his release," Cabag said.

He said an emissary from the local communist front informed him about the letter of appeal being sought.

Gaila and five other civilians were taken by about 100 rebels. *Frinston Lim, Inquirer Mindanao*

RECYCLED MATERIALS turn into Christmas decorations in Baguio City.
VINCENT CABREZA/INQUIRER NORTHERN LUZON

Senators asked to play Santa for road projects

LA TRINIDAD, BENGUET—THE provincial board has endorsed to the Senate 10 resolutions asking for P22.3 million in financial assistance for the construction of farm-to-market roads and livelihood projects.

The Benguet Farmers Federation Inc. (BFFI) said the province's bid to become the "vegetable bowl" of the North Luzon Agribusiness Quadrangle (NLAQ), one of the government's super regions, remained derailed by rugged roads in the interior towns that made delivery of harvests to markets difficult.

"It's our Christmas wish," said Jose Andiso Sr., BFFI president.

Board Member Rogelio Leon, acting vice governor, said the Senate could also be generous like President Macapagal-Arroyo when she ordered the reversion of a 144-hectare property in Sumilao, Bukidnon, to be made part of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP).

The board resolutions asked eight senators to share their "pork barrel," officially called Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF), for farm-to-market roads in Benguet-Bisal, Bokod (Sen. Juan Miguel Zubiri, P1 million); Balway, Sablan (Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile, P3 million); Ambayaec, Bokod (Sen. Ramon Revilla Jr., P1 million); Bisal, Bokod (Sen. Manuel Lapid, P500,000); Afat, Itogon (Sen. Benigno Aquino III, P800,000); Pacso, Kabayan (Sen. Rodolfo Biazon, P2 million); Poblacion, Kibungan (Zubiri, P5 million); and Gadang, Kapangan (Zubiri, P5 million).

Sen. Pia Cayetano was asked to provide P2 million for the establishment of a farmers' cooperative for 13 towns, and Sen. Jamby Madrigal, P2 million for a senior citizens' livelihood program.

Board Member Johnny Uy, chair of the board's committee on agriculture, said the projects would put the farmers closer to the market.

"The farm-to-market roads would link them to the well-paved Halsema Highway, the province's main road to Baguio City and the vegetable trading post here," he said. *Delmar Cariño, Inquirer Northern Luzon*

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Website: www.inquirer.net/regions
Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Floreño G. Solmirano

Sisters' stamp collections win Asean tilt

By Delfin T. Mallari Jr.
Gumaca, Quezon

THREE FILIPINO STUDENTS, two of them sisters from Gumaca town in Quezon, reaped honors for the country in the first Youth Asean (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Stamp Exhibition held recently in Singapore.

> 'Every time we read about any stamp collector with a mailing address, we will write the collector through snail mail to exchange stamps'

Jally Marquez, 15, a fourth year student at the Gumaca National High School, bagged the gold trophy in the Class B category for her stamp collection entry "Pearl of the Orient." Her sister, Collie Marie, 14, a third year student of the same school, won the gold trophy in Class A for her collection on Asean.

Diana Britanico, a third year college student from Manila, received a silver trophy in Class C for her entry "Asean—In Focus."

The exhibit, held from Aug. 31 to Sept. 2 at the Singapore National Library, attracted 88 youths from all 10 Asean member-countries—Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Burma (Myanmar), Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. It coincided with Asean's 40th anniversary celebration.

The project of the Asean Committee of Culture and Information and the Singapore Philatelic Museum aimed to foster inter-Asean understanding, exchange of creative ideas, knowledge and relationship through philatelic activities.

Alyssah Xeniah Alcala, 14, a student from Sacred Heart College in Lucena City, has also been reaping international honors in stamp exhibitions.

On June 17, Alcala's collections, titled "Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II," was proclaimed the "2007 AAPE Youth Champion of Champions" in the National Topical Stamp Show in Irving, Texas, USA.

School projects

Known among stamp collectors as the "World Series of Philately Exhibition," the exhibit was sponsored by the American Association of Philatelic Exhibitors.

COLLIE Marie Marquez (left) and elder sister Jally show the glass trophies they won in the first Youth Asean Stamp Exhibition in Singapore. DELFIN T. MALLARI JR.

The Marquez sisters said they started collecting stamps as a hobby during their elementary years as part of school projects.

"I started when I was in Grade 5. My curiosity was aroused by the stamp collection of my Tito (Uncle) Ger. When we were still living together, I often pestered him with queries on how to collect stamps and that's it. Since then, my interest in collecting different stamps continued to develop," Collie said in an interview in their house in Gumaca.

The maternal uncle, Gerson Danseco, is the original avid collector in the family.

"I just shared them the passion involved in stamp collection. We now even exchanged stamps with each other to enrich our collections. I'm very proud of them with their achievements," said Danseco. He admitted that he never had any experience in joining philatelic exhibitions, except those sponsored by the Quezon Philatelic Society (QPS), of which he and his two nieces are members.

"I now have a worldwide collection of stamps," he said proudly.

The sisters are children of Rolando Marquez, a driver, and Janet, an entrepreneur.

Exchanging stamps

Jally learned from her uncle to communicate with all stamp collectors through letters with the goal of sharing and exchanging stamps.

"Every time we read about any stamp collector with a mailing address, we will write the collector through snail mail to exchange stamps. Striking a deal is easy since there is an equivalent stamp in the exchange arrangement," she said.

"We plan to exhibit our stamp collections in school to attract other students to also start their own," Collie said. She and her sister said they were the only collectors among the students.

In December last year, they learned from Stanley Siu, QPS president, about a national stamp collection exhibit to be held in Liwasang Bonifacio in Manila as a qualifying round for the Asean exhibit in Singapore.

"It was a three-day contest with entries from different philatelic organizations across the country. We just submitted our stamp collections for experience," Jally said.

"After I received and verified the information that my nieces had won the qualifying rounds, I immediately went to their rooms and broke the news to them that they were bound for Singapore and they should be ready with their passports," Danseco recalled.

Collie recalled: "It was too good to be true. But when he showed us the text messages and personally received the call from Manila later, that's it. We were both extremely happy and excited that we would be able to reach Singapore."

The Asean and Singapore sponsors shouldered all the expenses, plane fares and hotel accommodations of the participants.

Friendship

Dr. Balaji Sadasivan, Singapore's senior minister of state for foreign affairs and information, communications and the arts, presented the awards to the winning entries.

In his speech, a copy of which was posted in the Asean website, Sadasivan said: "The Youth Asean Stamp (YAS) Exhibition is one fine example of how people from different parts of Asean can come together in a unique way to share their experiences and build bonds of friendship."

The winners received glass trophies, certificates of award, and personalized souvenirs of the event.

The Philippine delegation included Josefina Tiongson-Cura, board director and former president of the Filipinas Stamp Collectors Club, and another official.

The Marquez sisters said they enjoyed every minute of their stay in Singapore, especially the fellowship with young collectors from other Asean countries.

They thanked Monsignor Ramon Tiama of the Diocese of Gumaca, a serious stamp collector with a rich collection, for his help.

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Phone Pals, Realtors derail foes

GAMES TOMORROW *(Cuneta Astrodome)*
4:50 p.m.—Welcoat vs Red Bull
7:20 p.m.—Coca-Cola vs Barangay Ginebra

By June Navarro

THE SUSPENSION OF MAC CARDONA has served Renren Ritualo in good stead.

The Talk 'N Text sniper enjoyed all the shooting room last night and led the Phone Pals to a 127-115 demolition of the Air21 Express in the Smart-PBA Philippine Cup at the Cuneta Astrodome.

Normally sharing the minutes with Cardona, Ritualo exploited his extended playing time to fire 26 points, 19 of them in the first half when the Phone Pals tore the Express' defense apart.

Cardona, who churns out 15.4 points an outing, was suspended for a game and fined P20,000 for hitting a driving Hercules Tangkay with a clothesline tackle during Talk 'N Text's recent victory over Welcoat.

"We lost our top scorer and he (Ritualo) knows that he has to step up," said Talk 'N Text coach Derrick Pumaren.

Ritualo, whose numbers plummeted this conference, scored the first seven points of the match as the Phone Pals took a 14-4 headstart they sustained throughout.

The Phone Pals improved to 8-6 while the Express took their fourth straight loss and dropped to 5-9.

Sta. Lucia made it a three-way tie at 8-6 by rolling to its fourth straight win after thumping Alaska, 101-96, in the second game.

Kelly Williams again paced the Realtors with 21 points and nine rebounds while Ryan Reyes added 17 points on top of eight rebounds and three steals.

Meanwhile, lawyer Chito Salud took a leave of absence as legal counsel of the league effective yesterday until Jan. 10, the day when the board of governors convenes to settle the commissionership issue, PBA officer in charge Sonny Barrios said. Salud and Nextel chief Lambert Ramos are the two remaining candidates for the PBA commissioner's post.

The scores:

First Game

TALK 'N TEXT 127—Ritualo 26, Washington 25, Peek 17, Alapag 15, Ferreria 11, De Ocampo 11, Allado 10, Belano 8, Aljamal 3, Billones 1, Fran 0.

AIR21 115—De Ocampo 20, Santos 19, Kraner 14, Canaleta 14, Espinas 12, Arboleda 11, Cruz 10, Se 6, Intal 5, Chia 2, Magsumbol 0, Sotto 0.

Quarters: 34-27, 58-44, 94-80, 127-115

Second Game

STA. LUCIA REALTY 101—Williams 21, Reyes 17, Yeo 17, Omolon 14, Miranda 11, Espino 9, Aquino 7, Mendoza 5, Daa 0, Gonzales 0.

ALASKA 96—Cortez 23, Miller 21, Thoss 13, Ferriols 13, Hugnatan 12, Quiñahan 6, Laure 4, Carlaso 4, Capus 0, Aban 0, Dela Cruz 0.

Quarters: 22-19, 51-38, 78-66, 101-96

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DID YOU KNOW

ON DEC. 8, 1941, or the day after Japanese forces bombed Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, Japanese airplanes attacked Manila, Baguio, Davao and Clark Field in Pampanga. On Dec. 10, they bombed the American naval base in Cavite. Japan's main invasion force landed in Lingayen Gulf, Pangasinan on Dec. 22 that same year.

Cyril L. Bonabente, Inquirer Research

LANTERNS GALORE
The University of the Philippines campus in Quezon City was abloom with entries of students to the traditional Lantern Parade held yesterday. Left: National Artist Bencab was the subject of an entry submitted by UP Fine Arts students. Right: Lanterns using the colorful "ikot" jeepneys that ply the campus route as motif.
JOAN BONDOC

Ailing doctor traffic jam casualty

Ambulance breakdown prevents transport of patient to hospital

By Jeannette I. Andrade

A MASSIVE TRAFFIC JAM ON Edsa Tuesday afternoon caused an ambulance transporting a 65-year-old doctor to a hospital to break down when its radiator overheated after the vehicle was stuck in traffic for hours.

As a result, it took nearly an hour for concerned bystanders to find another vehicle to take the sick doctor to the hospital.

By the time Dr. Amelia de la Cruz, owner of A. de la Cruz Maternity Hospital in Cavite City, got to the Philippine Heart Center, it was already too late.

Doctors tried their best to revive her but she was pronounced dead at 3:30 p.m., an hour after the ambulance carrying her broke down at the intersection of Edsa and Kamias Road in Quezon City.

The incident was witnessed by reporters who were at the Quezon City Police District headquarters on Edsa, across the site where the ambulance broke down.

Based on what the reporters were able to find out, the ambulance came from the Cavite hospital and was taking De la Cruz, who had suffered a cardiac arrest, to the Philippine Heart Center.

The ambulance, however, got stuck in traffic at Edsa Magallanes. By the time it got to Kamias Road, the vehicle stopped because the radiator had overheated.

Reporters tried to seek help from policemen at the QCPD Kamuning Station 10 but the lawmen said they did not have the keys to their patrol car.

Ireneo Baligod, a computer operator of the Bureau of Internal Revenue who was driving by the area, immediately offered to take the patient to the hospital on board his van.

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Detained ex-solon confined in Makati hospital

By Julie M. Aurelio and DJ Yap

FORMER OCCIDENTAL MINdoro Rep. Joselito Villarosa, who is detained at the New Bilibid Prisons after being convicted of murder, has been confined since last week at the Makati Medical Center in Makati City.

This was confirmed yesterday to the INQUIRER by NBP penal superintendent Juanito Leopando who said Villarosa was transferred to the MMC last week.

Leopando, however, referred the INQUIRER to the NBP Hospital when asked for the reason behind Villarosa's confinement, saying he was not familiar with the latter's medical records.

The INQUIRER tried to contact hospital officials but was told the staff was having their Christmas party.

Sought for more information on Villarosa's condition, Dr. Eric Nubla, chief of the MMC patient relations office, said he was not authorized to give any information about the patient.

The INQUIRER then talked to the NBP guards stationed outside Villarosa's room.

They confirmed that the former congressman was resting inside but said that they did not know when the murder convict was taken to the hospital or for what illness.

According to them, they were assigned to guard the hospital room only yesterday morning.

Sources, meanwhile, said Villarosa was being treated for high blood pressure and pneumonia. They added that he also has a history of asthma.

On Christmas Eve last year, he was confined at the same hospital for high blood pressure and a swollen leg due to diabetes.

Then Bureau of Corrections Director Vicente Vinarao later denied that Villarosa had been granted a "holiday furlough."

In a text message, BuCor Director Ricardo Dapat said that four doctors were attending to the former congressman.

"The BuCor will verify the data later when he is discharged from the hospital," Dapat added.

NBP insiders, however, said that Villarosa looked "normal" and "healthy" when he was spotted at the NBP chapel last week.

"Except for his old age, he looked normal, not sickly at all a week ago," one of the sources told the INQUIRER.

The former congressman was even able to work at the livelihood center near his cell, the source added.

Last year, a Quezon City judge meted out the death sentence to Villarosa and six farmers for the murder of Michael and Paul Quintos in 1997.

The sentence was later commuted to life imprisonment with the abolition of the death penalty.

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Affordable finger food like squid balls, shrimp balls, chicken balls, fish balls and *kikiam* are sold at this stall with an interesting name.
FRANCES GUMAPAC

Suspected cell phone snatcher shot dead

By Jeannette I. Andrade

A MAN WAS KILLED BY THE police in a shootout on Tuesday night in Novaliches, Quezon City, several minutes after he allegedly took a man's cell phone at gunpoint.

Police have yet to identify the slain man who was described as between 25 and 30 years old, around 5'5" to 5'6" in height, fair-skinned and of medium build. He was clad in a white T-shirt, black jacket and denim pants.

SPO1 Margeto Dayan, desk officer of the Quezon City Police District Novaliches Station 4, said incident happened at around 9:30 p.m. Tuesday on Ramirez Street, Barangay Novaliches Proper after the unidentified suspect fired on policemen who were chasing him.

Dayan said that based on the report, the policemen were forced to shoot back in self-defense.

The suspect died on the spot.

Before the incident, the unidentified man allegedly grabbed the cell phone of Jason Ramos, 21, a resident of the same barangay.

Ramos said that he was walking home when the man blocked his path and declared a hold-up. He then sought help from policemen who were on patrol in the area.

Police investigators said they were trying to determine the identity of the rob suspect.

GMA earns 'pogi' points siding with farmers

ON TARGET
Ramon Tulfo

PRESIDENT GLORIA SCORED *pogi* points in siding with the Sumilao farmers who have won public sympathy in their fight for possession of 144 hectares of land in Bukidnon.

But she knows that favoring the farmers doesn't end their woes since the present owners of the land, San Miguel Foods Inc., won't naturally take the decision sitting down.

The SMFI, which has invested millions of pesos in the land to make it into an agro-industrial estate, will go back to the Supreme Court.

In 1998, the high court ruled in favor of the Quisumbing family, the original owners, to make the land, subject to government expropriation under its land reform program, an agro-industrial estate.

San Miguel Corp., an affiliate of SMFI, has since bought the land from the Quisumbings.

President Arroyo knows that the high tribunal seldom reverses itself.

The case will take years to decide. By then, GMA shall have been out of office and will no longer be affected if the decision doesn't favor the farmers.

* * *

If you read the side of the Quisumbings in a front-page story in another daily, you will find that most of the farmers who staged the 1,700-kilometer march to Manila were not even tenants of the land.

Under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP), only tenants of land expropriated by the government are beneficiaries of CARP.

Before the Catholic Church took up the cudgels for the Sumilao farmers it should first have checked if they were tenants of the land in question.

* * *

Sen. Gregorio Honasan, chair of the Senate committee on land reform, said the President should have seen the bigger picture in the controversy.

The bigger picture is the economic improvement for the whole town of Sumilao and the entire country, not just the interests of "50 farmers involved there."

The main issue in the Sumilao case, Honasan said, is how to make full use of the land in question.

Honasan, who led several coup attempts against the Aquino administration to improve the lot of the small soldiers, should have sided with the small farmers outright; but he didn't.

Not just yet, anyway.

Honasan says that Ms Arroyo should also have looked into the interests of industrial investors, like SMFI, who might put their money somewhere else.

* * *

Okay, let's grant that the Supreme Court will reverse itself and give the land in question to the Sumilao farmers.

And then, what?

Can they put up billions of pesos the way SMFI does now to make the 144 hectares an agro-industrial estate?

Which investor would be crazy enough to put his money in the venture knowing that his fellow investor, SMFI, was given the short end of the bargain?

* * *

Eat and drink moderately during the holidays.

Otherwise, you might not be able to enjoy Christmas, 2008.

Funeral parlors do brisk business in January and February.

Most of their clients went overboard in their eating and drinking during the Christmas season.

In medical parlance in the US, those who die due to the excesses of the holiday season had a "holiday heart."

So, take it easy on the *lechon*, the roast beef, the *leche flan*, and the beer and liquor.

You will have more of them in the next holiday season next year.

300 families lose homes in Caloocan, Pasay fires

By Nancy C. Carvajal and Julie M. Aurelio

WITH JUST A FEW DAYS TO GO before Christmas, the holidays appear bleak for 300 families who were left homeless when fires reportedly caused by unattended candles broke out in Caloocan City yesterday morning and in Pasay City on Tuesday afternoon.

Supt. Juan Reyes of the Caloocan City Bureau of Fire Protection said some 50 families were affected when a fire hit Dagat-dagatan, one of the city's most thickly populated areas.

Reyes said the fire started in a two-story house owned by Lilia Caparoso, 48, of Block 28, Lot 16-A Phase 3, F-1 Barangay 14.

No one was reported hurt but the fire spread quickly due to strong winds.

Most of the houses in the area were also made of light materials.

Reyes said at least 10 houses were razed while damage to property was estimated at more than P1 million.

The fire started at 9:15 a.m. and was placed under control several hours later.

In Pasay City, over 240 families were affected by a four-hour fire which burned down their homes at 4:48 p.m. Tuesday.

Arson investigator SFO1 Alfredo Delfin Jr. said they were looking into the possibility that a lit candle in the house of Belen Morales at the corner of G. Villanueva Street and Taft Avenue may have caused the blaze.

The fire was so intense that the Light Rail Transit operations from the Central Station to Vito Cruz were halted at 5:45 p.m. Operations resumed an hour later.

No fatalities were reported but a firefighter and a resident suffered minor injuries. FO1 Federico Enero sustained a cut in the right hand while Marie Morales suffered a fractured left arm.

Authorities placed the damage to property at around P5 million.

Firefighters had difficulty putting out the fire because of the narrow alley leading to the compound.

Authorities declared the fire under control at 5:52 p.m., eventually putting it out at 8:54 p.m.

Around 12 fire trucks from all over southern Metro Manila responded to the blaze.

However, 240 families were unable to save most of their belongings and are now staying at the Epifanio delos Santos Elementary School gymnasium.

Joseph and Berna Polito said they only managed to save the clothes on their back.

"The kids are okay but where are we supposed to sleep? We have nowhere to go," Berna said.

Maylon Beroy, who also lost her house, was thankful that her newborn daughter Ana Mae was safe. However, like the other displaced families, she and her family face the cold prospect of spending Christmas in the streets.

Mayor Wenceslao Trinidad later visited the victims and instructed the local social welfare department to provide food, medicine and temporary shelter to the affected families.

METROBRIEFS

Cops nab Irishman

A 57-YEAR-OLD year-old Irishman was nabbed by the Manila Police District for reportedly molesting young boys in Sta. Mesa the other night. Frank Massey, a native of Northern Ireland, was nabbed with his alleged mute cohort, Maritess Raga, 41, after the police received a complaint that Massey was seen feeding and kissing several street children aged 8 to 14, PO3 Virginia Monton of Station 8 said. Massey, however, denied the allegations and said he was merely helping the young boys.

Allison W. Lopez

New school building

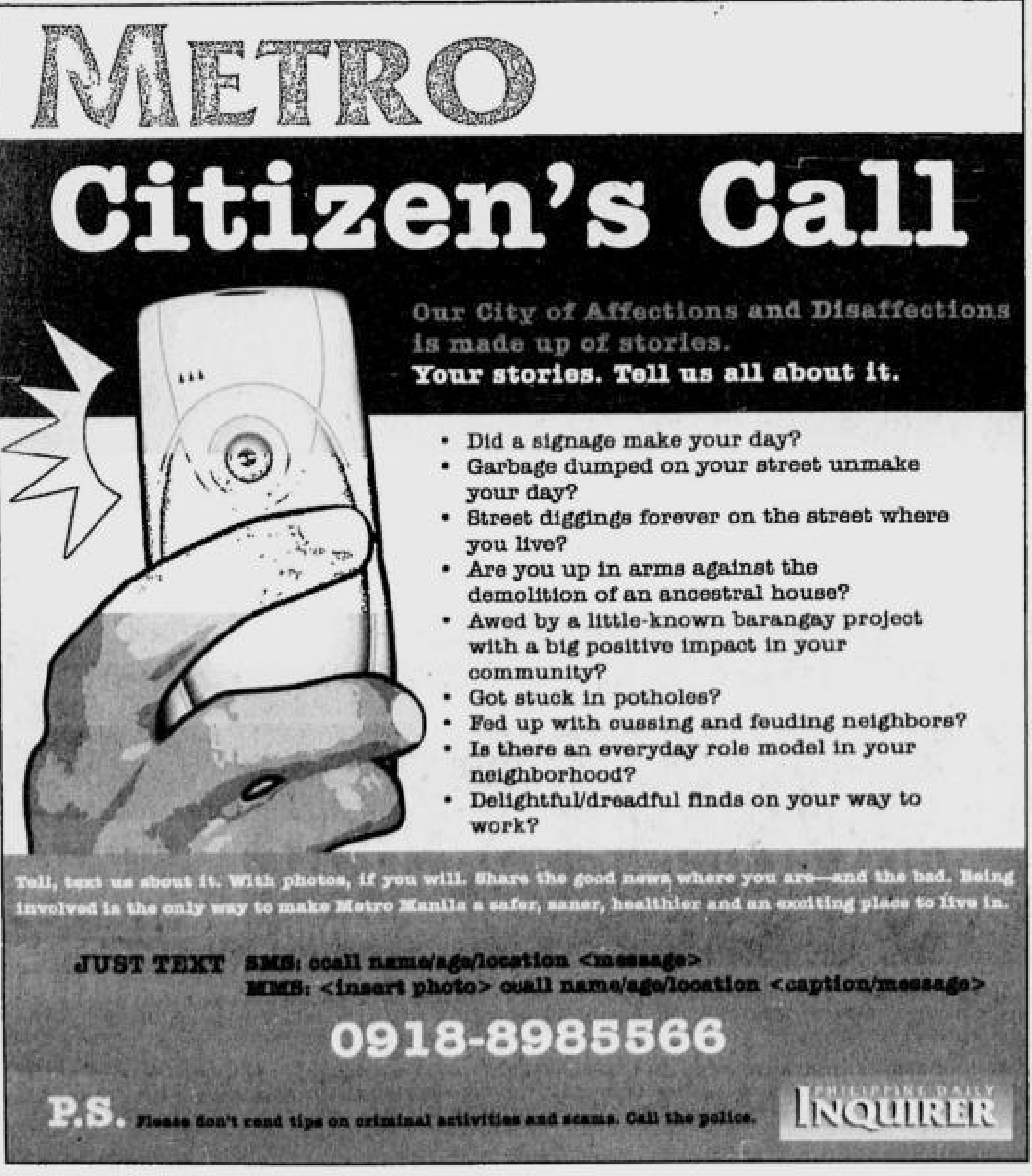
A NEW school building donated by a group of Chinese businessmen led by taipan Lucio Tan was inaugurated in Tondo, Manila, yesterday. Mayor Alfredo Lim thanked the Federation of Filipino Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry Inc. for sharing their resources with the students of the Emilio Jacinto Elementary School by providing eight more classrooms. He also cited the other donors, among them Mary Go Ng, Jimmy Cheng and Councilor Moises "Bobby" Lim. Tan said their contribution was part of the School for the Barrios project of the FFCCCII, which has so far built more than 8,000 classrooms nationwide. "This is our humble contribution to our youth because we believe that good education is the best gift we can give them," he said.

Allison W. Lopez

Foul play or suicide?

A 16-YEAR-OLD boy allegedly hanged himself at the fire wall of an old bus terminal before dawn yesterday in Quezon City. Quezon City Police District Criminal Investigation and Detection Unit (QCPD-CIDU) reports identified the teenager as Manuel Reyes, a resident of Pritil, Tondo. A rope was looped around his neck and his body was hanging from a steel pipe protruding from a 10-foot wall inside the old Pantranco bus terminal at the corner of Roosevelt and Quezon Avenues in San Francisco del Monte. The body was discovered at 4 a.m. by a passenger of a public utility jeepney which was using the area as a terminal. Police said they were trying to find out how the boy, a resident of Tondo, Manila, ended up in the area.

Jeannette I. Andrade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- Awed by a little-known barangay project with a big positive impact in your community?
- Got stuck in potholes?
- Fed up with cussing and feuding neighbors?
- Is there an everyday role model in your neighborhood?
- Delightful/dreadful finds on your way to work?

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P.S. Please don't send tips on criminal activities and scams. Call the police.
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Suspected illegal recruiter nabbed

By Allison W. Lopez

A WOMAN ACCUSED OF RECRUITING minors who ended up in sex dens in Malaysia has been arrested in an entrapment operation conducted by the National Bureau of Investigation.

The NBI Anti-Human Trafficking Division (Ahtrad) led by head agent Ferdinand Lavin identified the suspect as Evangeline Cruz Manapsal alias Gemma, 37, a resident of Balintawak, Quezon City.

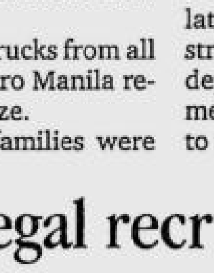
Lavin said they arrested Manapsal with the help of the younger sister of one of the eight women rescued from a sex den in Kota Kinabalu by the Jesus is Lord Church Worldwide earlier this month.

The eight women, who arrived in Manila on Dec. 13, said Manapsal had promised them jobs as entertainers or masseuses with a daily salary of P4,500 to P6,500.

The NBI said that "Remy," the sister of one of the eight victims, contacted Manapsal who promised her a job in Malaysia. The suspect was later arrested in an entrapment operation.

Lawyer Virginia Jose, who represents the eight victims, said more than 50 Filipino women are still detained in prostitution dens in Malaysia reportedly managed by Manapsal's sister, Arlene Lucio, and three Malaysians named "Atchuan," "Achung" and "Tommy," all of whom remain at large.

Carpenter has kidney problem


TRAMPE

JAIME TRAMPE'S LETTER to the INQUIRER talks about his love for his work and wife and his kidney ailment.

The 53-year-old carpenter, a resident of Pili Avenue, Block 7, Barangay West Rembo in Makati City, said he is now unable to support his wife, Merly, as he is undergoing dialysis at the Asia Renal Care Philippines Inc. at 75 Quezon Avenue, Barangay Sto. Domingo in Quezon City, twice a week. Each session costs P2,550.

Trampe is appealing to kindhearted people to help him out financially "*para po madugtungan n'yo pa ang aking buhay* (so that you can lengthen my life)."

Those who want to help him can call him at 7512472 or deposit their donations in his bank account in any Landbank branch (account number 2886134293).

Santiago R. Alcantara

Businessman likely to win S. Korea polls

SEOUL—SOUTH KOREANS went to the polls on Wednesday expected to choose as president a former CEO vowing to knock the economy into shape and stand up to the North, but whose authority could be weakened by a fraud investigation.

The last legally allowed opinion polls a week ago showed former Hyundai Group executive and ex-Seoul mayor Lee Myung-bak on course to win the single, five-year term to lead the world's 13th largest economy, ending 10 years of liberal presidents.

But days before the election fresh allegations of financial corruption surfaced, which analysts said would dent Lee's lead but not derail him.

That leaves the prospect of his becoming the first president-elect under criminal investigation.

"We need to change the regime that has been in power for the last 10 years," Lee told reporters at a polling station, sticking to his campaign theme that his conservative agenda and can-do approach would restore a once booming economy.

On Monday, parliament voted to appoint a special investigator to look into charges that Lee, who denies any wrongdoing, was linked to an investment firm suspected of swindling millions of dollars from investors.

Even if he is implicated, the outcome of the probe is unlikely to be resolved before the inauguration on Feb. 25. A sitting president cannot be prosecuted for such crimes.

Lee's daunting lead of nearly 30 percentage points over his closest opponent in last week's polls, and the probe, have cooled enthusiasm in a country used to close races in the four previous elections since its first democratic presidential vote in 1987.

Voters put the economy first in this race, pollsters said, and are ready to make Lee the first former top executive to run the country.

They have previously sent an ex-general, two dissidents who fought decades of dictatorship and a human rights lawyer to the presidential Blue House.

The National Election Commission said turnout as of mid-afternoon was down by about 7 percent from the same time five years ago, when the race was neck-and-neck.

Pollsters say they expect about 60 percent of the country's 37.7 million voters to cast ballots, down from 71 percent in 2002. Voting ends at 0900 GMT.

Lee's closest rival is the left-leaning Chung Dong-young, who served in the cabinet of outgoing President Roh Moo-hyun and is seen as his heir.

"This election is a battle between truth and lies," Chung told reporters when he voted. He later went to the west coast to help in the clean up of South Korea's worst oil spill.

North Korea has seen a strong flow of aid under the Roh government. Lee is likely to be less generous. He wants Seoul's largesse tied more closely to progress the North makes in ending its nuclear arms program.

LEE Myung-bak AFP

Financial markets have been encouraged by Lee's pledges to make life easier for foreign investors and cut through the red tape he sees as stifling local business, especially the giant conglomerates behind South Korea's economic rise.

Lee, nicknamed "the bulldozer" for his hard-charging style and who turned 66 on election day, says he wants to bring 7-percent growth. That compares with an average of a little over 4 percent during Roh's rule.

But economists say Lee's target is a tall order for a country coming under increasing competitive pressure from neighboring China and Japan while one of its biggest export markets, the United States, is looking at an economically tough 2008.

Economists want Lee to put in painful reforms to help South Korea transform from a manufacturing and export-based economy and better develop the finance and other services sectors. *Reuters*

EU faces showdown over CO2 emissions

BRUSSELS—THE EUROPEAN Commission faces a showdown between industrial and environmental champions on Wednesday over how to cut emissions of carbon dioxide from cars to fight climate change without harming European carmakers.

At a meeting of senior EU officials on Tuesday night, supporters of Germany's heavy luxury car manufacturers won a longer phasing in period for fines on manufacturers who fail to meet mandatory limits on exhaust emissions of the main greenhouse gas blamed for global warming, EU sources said.

Vice President for Enterprise Guenter Verheugen, an ardent defender of the German car industry, also sought to reduce the level of fines on companies that do not cut average car emissions to 130 grams per km through engine technology.

Environment Commission Stavros Dimas, a Greek, argued for gradually mounting fines from 2012 as an effective deterrent to force manufacturers to invest in clean technology and produce lighter cars to meet the EU standards.

The two men have been at loggerheads since the EU executive set the headline goal last January of reducing car emissions to 120 gram/km by 2012, with the additional 10 grams coming from biofuels and measures to promote more fuel-efficient driving.

They are due to appear side-by-side on Wednesday to announce how the Commission proposes implementing the targets, notably the burden-sharing between large and small cars and the scale of fines on those who exceed the limits.

Even if they agree, it will not be the last word. Member states and the European Parliament must back the legislation.

German producers such as BMW and Mercedes-Benz make heavier vehicles and their emissions are rising while France's Peugeot and Renault and Fiat of Italy make lighter cars whose emissions are falling.

Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso summoned the two commissioners to a meeting on Tuesday to try to reconcile their divergent positions but differences persisted, the sources said.

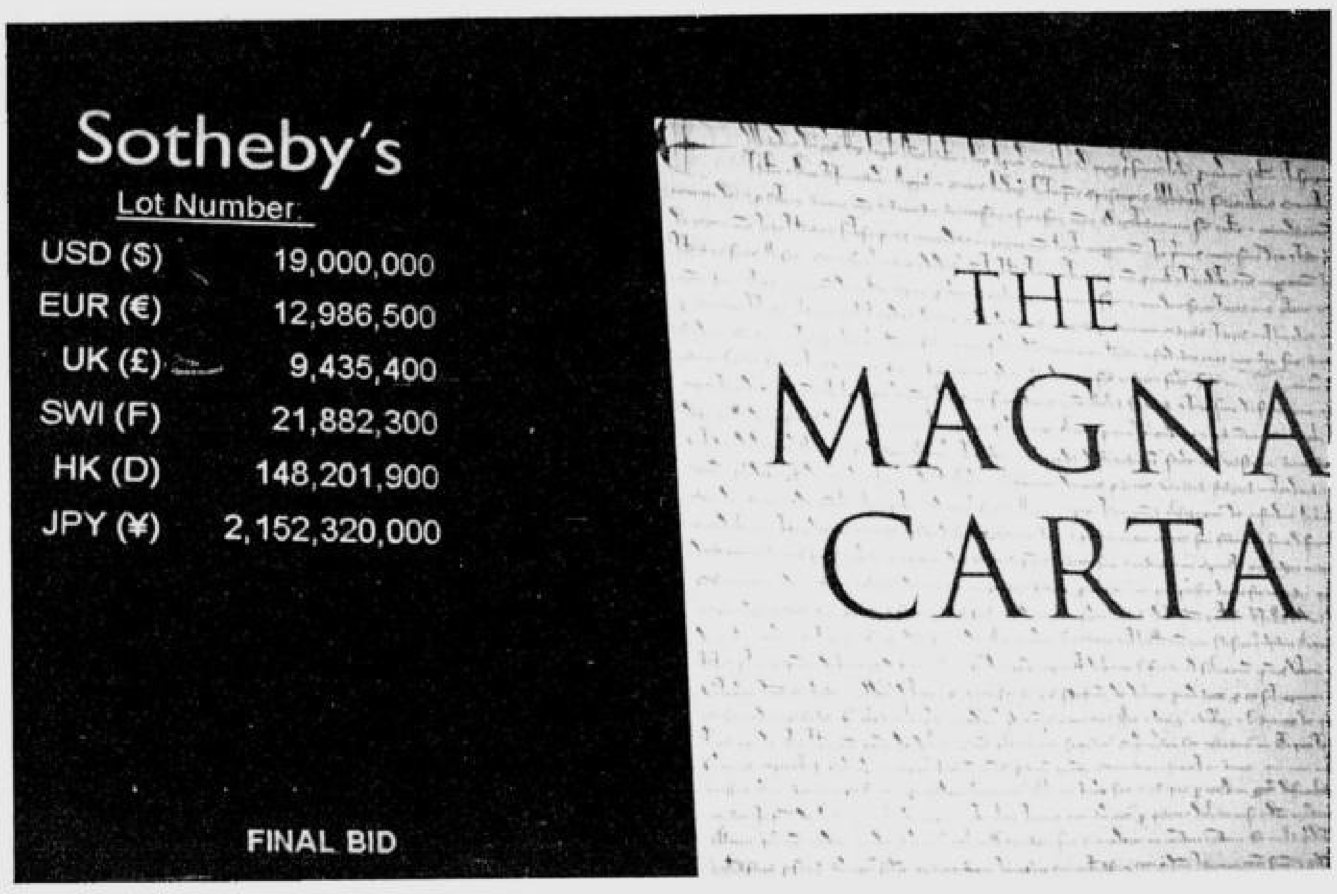
On Tuesday night, Commission officials agreed that the fines would be phased in over more than the three years originally planned from 2012, but the level is still in dispute.

Pleading for more time, Sigrid de Vries of the European Automobile Manufacturers Association, said: "Industry is not against legislation but it wants this rigid system to be made a bit more flexible to cope with production cycles and market developments." An EU source said the burden of making emissions cuts would be shared more or less evenly between makers of heavy and light cars.

Germany had argued for an 80 percent so-called slope curve, putting most of the onus on makers of smaller cars. France had demanded a 25 percent level that would have targeted "gas guzzlers." The source said the outcome would be in the middle.

Environmental campaigners say the 27-nation EU's role as a world leader in the fight against global warming is on the line.

"The EU's credibility on climate change is at stake. It must rise the the challenge and not back down in the face of self-interested lobbying from the car industry," Tony Bosworth of Friends of the Earth said in a statement. *Reuters*



BIDS ARE projected as a rare copy of the Magna Carta is auctioned off at Sotheby's New York to a phone bidder for $21.3 million on Dec. 18 in New York City. The document is often referred to as the birth certificate of freedom. The Magna Carta is the most important document ever auctioned at Sotheby's. AFP

Magna Carta sold for $21.3M at NY auction

NEW YORK—ONE OF ONLY 17 existing copies of the Magna Carta, an 800-year-old English royal manuscript setting out the rights of man, sold at auction at Sotheby's in New York Tuesday for $21.3 million.

Arguably the most important document ever to be auctioned, the iconic vellum manuscript was bought by David Rubenstein, a US lawyer and founder of the controversial Washington-based private equity firm The Carlyle Group.

Rubenstein, who was a domestic policy advisor to former president Jimmy Carter, said his offices were just 300 meters from the US National Archives, where the document has been on display for most of the last 23 years.

"I visited this on several occasions and in doing so I thought that the three most important documents in Western civilization were the Magna Carta, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution," he told reporters.

"I thought it was very important that the Magna Carta stay in the United States and I was concerned that the only copy in the United States might escape as a result of this auction," Rubenstein added.

He said he would loan the royal charter, which is dated 1297 and bears the wax seal of King Edward I, to the US National Archives.

"I have always believed that this was an important document to our country, even though it wasn't drafted in our country. I think it was the basis for the Declaration of Independence and the basis for the Constitution," he said.

"It's a privilege to be an owner of it, but I'm really just a temporary custodian of it because it's really a gift to the American people for them to be able to see it," he said.

Rubenstein's Carlyle Group is considered a secretive organization that specializes in defense industry and aerospace industry contracts and has counted luminaries such as former president George Bush among its advisors.

Perhaps tellingly, Rubenstein opted to bid for the document by telephone, even though he was in the sales room.

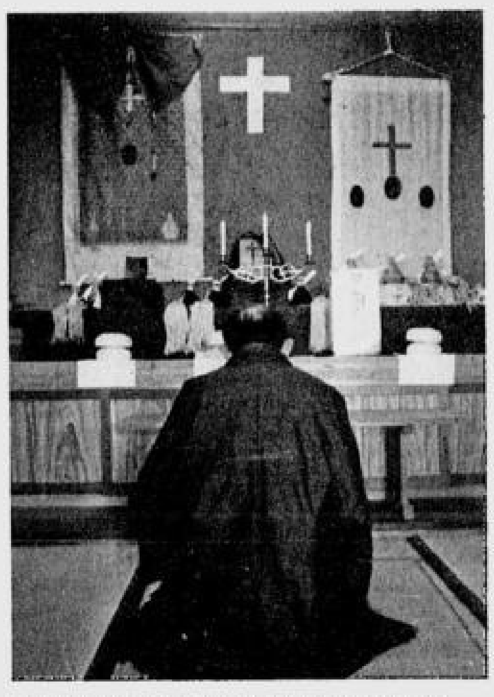
"I think it's a good day for our country because this is really going to stay," Rubenstein said, after paying the lower range of the document's pre-sale estimate of $20 million to $30 million.

"We were thrilled with the sale, we were thrilled to have the privilege of offering the most important document in the world," said Sotheby's Vice Chairman and the evening's auctioneer, David Redden, after the sale.

He described the vellum manuscript as "the great-great-great-grandfather of some of the great documents—at least in America—of freedom." The manuscript is the only one of 17 remaining examples ever likely to be sold. Most of the rest belong to Britain's national archives, cathedrals or universities while the only other copy outside Britain belongs to Australia.

The manuscript, most likely made of sheepskin, enshrined the rule of law in England at a time of disagreements between King John and the English barons. It was first issued in 1215 and confirmed as English law in 1297. *AFP*

Japan's 'Hidden Christians' face extinction


YASUTAKA Toriyama, a descendant of Japan's "Kakure Kirishitan," or Hidden Christians, conducts a ritual in front of holy relics on Ikitsuki Island Dec. 16. REUTERS

IKITSUKI ISLAND—ONE BY one, the sacred relics—a medal of the Virgin Mary, a crucifix and other revered objects—are taken from a cupboard and placed on an altar for a Christmas Eve rite passed down through centuries from Japan's earliest Christians.

Then, kneeling in the simple hall built where martyrs are said to have been burned on this tiny, remote island 400 years ago, five elders murmur chants as they bow and make the sign of the cross.

The kimono-clad deacons are descendants of "Kakure Kirishitan," or Hidden Christians, who kept their religion alive on Ikitsuki and in other isolated pockets of Japan during 250 years of suppression, adapting their rites to the demands of secrecy and blending them with local beliefs.

These days, the religion faces a modern threat of extinction as young people, like those elsewhere in rural Japan, leave their homes in search of jobs, drifting away from their gods and the rituals that honor them.

"It's sad. The tradition of our ancestors is disappearing," said Ayuzo Matsuyama, one of those gathered to observe "Osanmachi" and "Gotanjo"—Christmas Eve and Christmas—last weekend, the last Saturday and Sunday before the winter solstice.

"We inherited this 'old Christianity' from our ancestors and we wanted to continue it forever, but young people don't feel that way," added the 79-year-old former maker of sake, or rice wine.

First brought to Japan by Portuguese missionaries in 1549, Christianity was banned a few decades later in 1614, initiating a period of bloody persecution that forced the faithful to choose between martyrdom or hiding their beliefs.

Rites such as confession and communion that could be conducted only by priests were lost. Others took on elements of Buddhist ancestor worship, indigenous Shinto with its focus on purification, and folk practices such as prayers for good crops.

Medals or hanging scrolls depicting saints and martyrs, often with Japanese features, were hidden in cupboards as "nando-gami" ("gods in the closet") and only taken out on special days.

In an apparent echo of the bread and wine of the Eucharist, elders still share sashimi and sake as part of the Christmas Eve and other ceremonies. Huge "mochi" rice cakes adorn the alter.

Transmitted orally and in secret, Latin "oratio" chants, "orasho" in Japanese, lost all but symbolic meaning.

"They preserved the style and form of the Christianity ... that they inherited, but the teachings were no longer from the Bible and changed into respect for local martyrs, so in that sense it can be seen as a Japanese ethnic religion," said Shigeo Nakazono, curator of an island museum who has studied the "Kakure Kirishitan" for years.

When Roman Catholic missionaries returned with the lifting of the ban in 1873, some Japanese Christians accepted their teachings, but others clung to what they saw as the true faith of their fathers.

Matsuyama, who like many of his generation learned "orasho" when he turned 20, admits he doesn't understand the repetitive phrases, some evocative of original Latin or Greek, such as "San Maria" and "anmezusu" (amen), others echoing Buddhist prayers.

"I thought I had to learn it because it had been handed down and it was a kind of memorial for those who died," he said. *Reuters*

Witness says Diana's driver was too reckless

LONDON—A WITNESS AT THE inquest into the deaths of Princess Diana and boyfriend Dodi Fayed said Tuesday that she had been frightened by the recklessness of the man who drove the couple's car into a fatal crash.

Myriah Daniels, a holistic healer and masseuse who was on the staff of Fayed's yacht Jonikal, said she rode in a Range Rover driven by Henri Paul when the couple returned to Paris late in August 1997.

"I should be dead. I was positive I would be killed in that drive," Daniels testified.

British and French police hold Paul responsible for the crash on Aug. 31, 1997, in which he died, along with Diana and Fayed. They found evidence that his blood-alcohol level was over the legal limit and that he was speeding.

Daniels rode with Paul in a convoy while Diana and Fayed were driven by their regular chauffeur from the airport to central Paris. Other witnesses have described paparazzi photographers in cars and on motorcycles pursuing the couple at the time.

"Henri Paul almost killed us, honest to God. He was driving way too fast and recklessly, and I was saying 'Slow down, slow down,' but nobody's listening and nobody's doing anything," Daniels said.

"We went down the freeway and he was still driving crazily and I still don't understand what we were trying to outrun—I couldn't see any motorcycles," she said.

"He was driving like a maniac through the traffic. He drove from the left-hand lane all the way across the freeway to the off-side ramp and the Range Rover almost tipped over and I was sure we were all going to die.

She called him "probably a really nice man" but criticized his driving.

Daniels disputed assertions by Mohamed Al Fayed that his son and the princess had decided to marry and died a day before the intended announcement of an engagement, and that Diana was pregnant with Fayed's baby.

"Look, nobody will ever know if they would have hooked up," Daniels said.

"It was too soon. They had just met. They were having fun getting to know each other, and to this day I cannot believe at all that Dodi would have been premature in a situation like this to ask her to marry him. I do not believe that," Daniels said.

As for the alleged pregnancy, Daniels said: "She was not pregnant. Period." *AP*

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

58 dead in Pakistan train crash

MEHRABPUR—A PAKISTANI EXPRESS TRAIN packed with holiday travellers derailed on Wednesday killing 58 people and injuring more than 120, officials said.

The Karachi Express night train was on its way from the southern city to Lahore when most of its carriages came off the rails and rammed into each other near the town of Mehrabpur, officials said.

A senior railway official ruled out sabotage, saying a faulty track was believed to have caused the crash.

Rescue workers tried to reach people still trapped in two badly damaged carriages and officials said the toll of dead and injured could rise. Some passengers cried out from inside a damaged carriage.

"Please, get us out," one begged.

Luggage, train wheels and other wreckage littered the scene in farmland about 300 km north of Karachi.

Soldiers from a nearby army camp carried the wounded on stretchers and hundreds of onlookers gathered at the site.

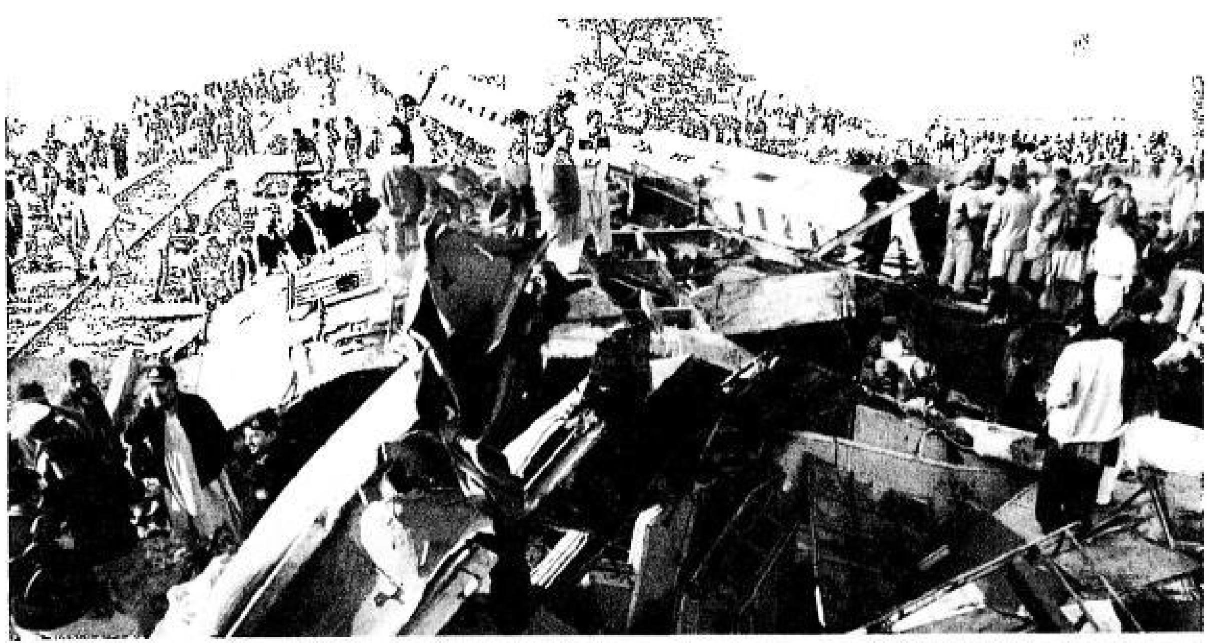
"According to our update, there are 58 bodies and 122 wounded. Forty of them are in critical condition," said Anwar Kazmi, an official with the Edhi ambulance service.

There were conflicting tolls, with some other officials giving a lower number of deaths.

"We're removing wreckage, injured people and dead bodies are still trapped," senior railway official Mohammad Amin Khan said.

The train crashed at about 2:30 a.m. and many of those on board were heading home for the Muslim festival of Eid al-Adha on Friday.

Military and railway officials at the scene said they did not know the cause of the crash but the general manager of Pakistan's railway system, Asad Saeed, ruled out sabotage.



PAKISTANI paramilitary troops and rescue workers search for dead bodies and injured passengers at the site of a derailed train near Mehrabpur, about 400 km north of Karachi on Wednesday, Dec. 19. AP

"There's a joint in the track which is welded and that has broken. It shrinks in winter. There are many forces on the track and sometimes this joint breaks," Saeed said.

One passenger reported hearing a loud rattling sound just before the crash.

Another railway official said 14 of the train's 18 carriages had come off the rails and four of them were completely destroyed.

Announcements were made in nearby mosques asking people's help.

"Initially there were no government or private rescuers. We did it on our own," said villager Mohammad Jamal.

"We used lantern and torches to take people out." Mohammad Iqbal, an injured passenger lying on track, said the train had suddenly begun rocking violently.

"I don't know what happened. All of a sudden the train started jerking about and we fell down," Iqbal said.

"It was all darkness. We were lying on the track for three to four hours in the dark." About 130 people were killed in July 2005 when a crowded passenger train rammed into another at a station, also in Sindh province, and a third train hit the wreckage. *Reuters*

UN extends mandate of US troops

UNITED NATIONS—THE UN SECURITY Council voted on Tuesday to extend the mandate of US-led foreign forces in Iraq for one year, as requested by Iraq for what Baghdad said was the last time.

US troops are expected to remain in Iraq after the end of 2008, when the UN mandate will expire, but Baghdad wants to change the terms of their presence so that it will be based on bilateral agreements under discussion with Washington.

Iraq has said this is the last time it will request an extension of the UN mandate for foreign forces and it may ask for the mandate to be ended even sooner than the end of 2008.

Ambassador Hamid al-Bayati said Iraq was grateful to friendly countries who helped get rid of Saddam Hussein but "no Iraqi government official, indeed no Iraqi citizen, wants the presence of foreign forces on Iraqi soil one day longer than they are needed." President George W. Bush is under pressure to reduce troops in Iraq amid growing US public disappointment in the war, more than 4 1/2 years after the March 2003 invasion.

A lull in violence helped by deployment of 30,000 US troops has allowed Washington to plan and begin a gradual drawdown of troops that will see 20,000 leave by July 2008.

Bayati said his government had, with the help of multinational forces, succeeded in averting the threat of a sectarian civil war and inflicted defeats on al-Qaida that left militants surrounded in isolated pockets.

"The Iraqi government has accomplished enormous steps towards the day when self-sustaining Iraqi security forces will be able to provide security to the Iraqi people," he said.

The Security Council resolution, which was passed unanimously, said the mandate would be reviewed by June 15, 2008 at the request of Baghdad and "it will terminate this mandate earlier if requested by the government of Iraq." Government spokesman Ali al-Dabbagh said at the weekend Iraq would need foreign troops to help defend it for another 10 years, but would not accept US bases indefinitely. *Reuters*

US judge orders CIA video hearings

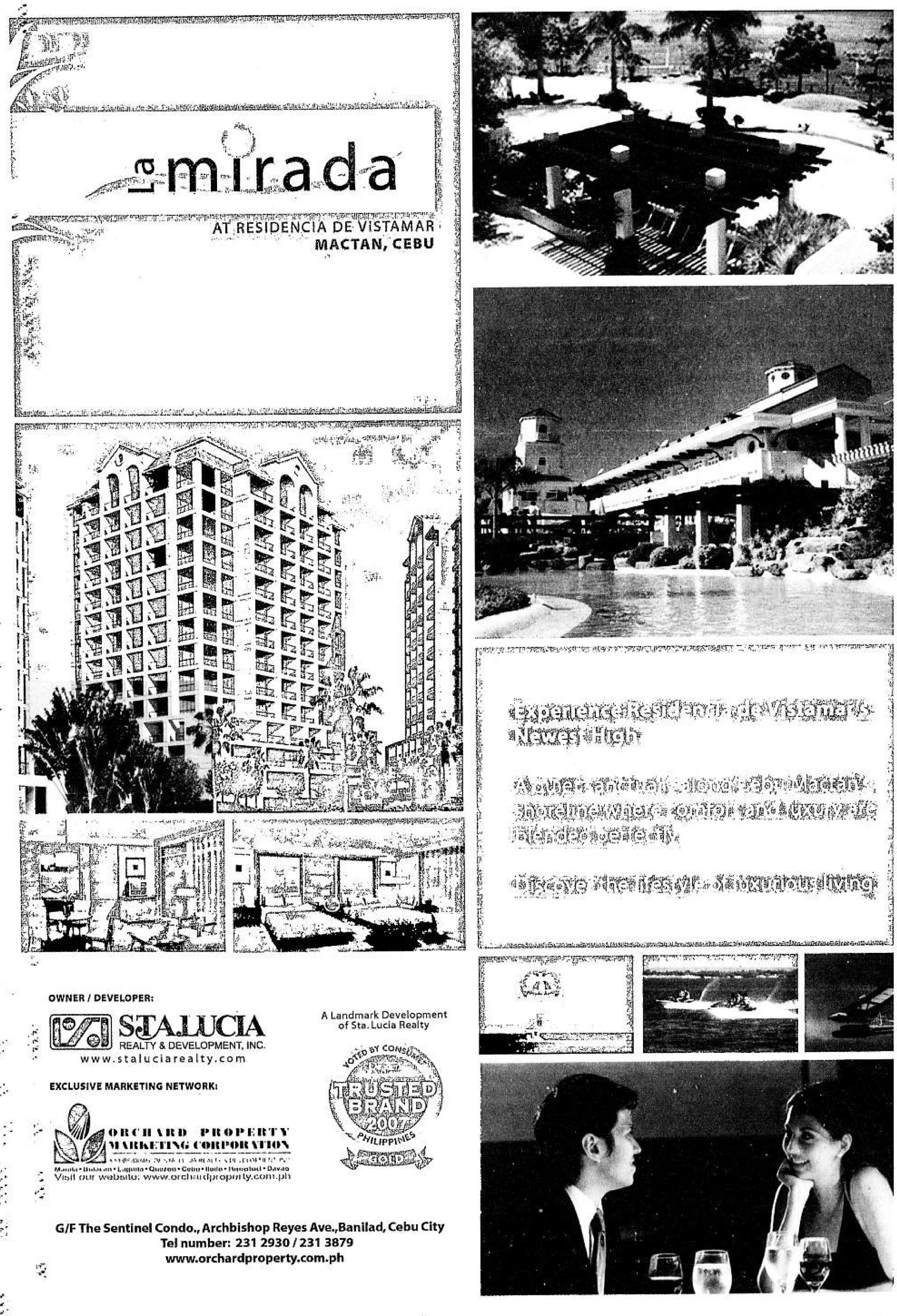
WASHINGTON—A US JUDGE ON TUESDAY ordered the Bush administration to explain whether the CIA violated a court order by destroying videotapes of the harsh interrogations of two terrorism suspects.

US District Court Judge Henry Kennedy, who in 2005 had ordered the government to preserve information on prisoner mistreatment at the US naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, scheduled a court hearing on the tapes for Friday, overriding government objections.

Lawyers for a group of Guantanamo Bay inmates contesting their detention had requested the hearing to learn whether the government had complied with the preservation order. They cited reports that information obtained from the interrogations implicated five unnamed Guantanamo detainees.

"We hope to establish a procedure to review the government's handling of evidence in our case ... and generally to require an accounting from a government that has admitted that it destroyed evidence," said David Remes, an attorney for the group of inmates.

He declined to comment on whether he believed any of his clients were implicated during the interrogations. *Reuters*



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Lakers rip Bulls; Kings triumph /A26

Pacquiao: I'll lose only if I don't prepare hard enough

By Roy Luarca

MANNY PACQUIAO USUALLY PLAYS down his chances when ranged against quality opponents like Juan Manuel Marquez. Yesterday, the Filipino ring icon took a different approach.

In high spirits, Pacquiao virtually declared that he will take the WBC super featherweight crown away from the Mexican champion when they clash anew on March 15 (March 16 in Manila) in Las Vegas.

"*Tingin ko matatalo lang ako kapag hindi nakapaghanda nang husto* (I'll lose only if I don't prepare long and hard enough)," said Pacquiao during a press conference held at the Holiday Inn-Crowne Plaza in Ortigas.

"*Mas kabado pa ako noong laban kay* (Erik) Morales *at* (Marco Antonio) Barrera, (I was more nervous with my fights against Morales and Barrera)," added Pacquiao. "*Tingin ko kayang-kaya ko siya* (I think I can beat him easily)."

"*Kahit walang* gloves *suntukan kaming dalawa* (I'll fight him even without gloves)," Pacquiao said in jest.

Pacquiao, who turned 29 on Monday, added that although the 34-year-old Marquez was still a superb fighter when he beat Barrera on March 17, the Mexican seemed to have slowed down a bit as compared to their first showdown that ended in a draw four years ago.

As always, however, Pacquiao refuses to be lulled into complacency.

"*Hindi puwedeng mag-kumpiyansa. Kailangan mas mahabang* training (I can't be too confident. I need to train longer than ever)."

Renowned trainer Freddie Roach, who graced the affair hosted by Solar Sports with international promoter Bob Arum and Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Lito Atienza, agreed, noting that Pacquiao intends to start whipping himself into shape before the year ends.

"Eight weeks of training (in the United States) will be enough," said Roach, noting that Pacquiao is the most intense and hardest working boxer he'd ever seen.

"When he (Pacquiao) hits the heavy bag, it seems he likes to kill it." said Roach, who also stressed that his ward has become a "much better fighter" since Pacquiao-Marquez I in May 2004.

That time, Pacquiao knocked down Marquez thrice in the first round, but couldn't finish off the Mexican as he injured his left hand and sustained blisters on his feet in the latter rounds.

"Again, well take the fight to him (Marquez)," said Roach. "And this time, he'll have to contend not only with Manny's left but both hands."

For his part, Arum encouraged Filipinos to come to Las Vegas in droves to support the fight card tentatively billed as "Unfinished Business".

Arum bared that he had secured a big block of tickets for Filipinos, thus assuring them of affordable ticket rates of $600, $400, $300 and $100, though ticket sales won't open until Friday at the Mandalay Bay Events Center.

"If Pacquiao fights before usually net 350,000 pay-per-view hits, our goal is 500,000 this time," said Arum.

Though Arum predicts a victory by Pacquiao, he said the contract guarantees a rematch in case of a Marquez victory.

If Pacquiao wins, Arum plans to arrange a duel with David Diaz at 135 lbs in July and even against Ricky Hatton, whom Floyd Mayweather stopped in the eighth round recently, at 140 lbs.

For now, however, Arum's sight is focused on Pacquiao-Marquez II.

He wants Pacquiao to bring down Marquez, who's regarded behind Morales and Barrera back home, and clean up the 130-pound division first.

Pacquiao intends to do just that—put a closure to an "Unfinished Business".

Road Kings book PBL semis ticket

By Marc Anthony Reyes

ERWIN STA. MARIA PLAYED THE GAME OF HIS LIFE and Cholo Villanueva delivered two free throws that lifted Toyota Balintawak past Mail and More in overtime, 81-78, and into the semifinals last night of the 2008 PBL V-Go Extreme Energy Drink Cup at The Arena in San Juan.

With Toyota holding a shaky 79-78 edge, Villanueva canned two charities in the final 14.8 seconds before the Road Kings foiled the Comets' last-ditch offensive to book a slot in the best-of-three semifinal series opposite undefeated Hapee starting today at the Rizal Memorial Coliseum.

Villanueva's heroics preserved Sta. Maria's career-high 32 points that kept Toyota Balintawak afloat all game long.

The Road Kings were dragged into the no-tomorrow match when Mail and More forged a 69-62 victory Tuesday.

Toyota Balintawak will be severely tested in its semifinal duel against the vaunted Hapee squad, especially since the Road Kings will be playing a third straight match in as many days.

San Mig Coffee and Harbour Centre will also begin their own semis duel today in a match that will feature the return of players who suited up for the national team that won the basketball title in the recent Southeast Asian Games in Thailand.

Gabe Norwood, who ran the plays for the Nationals, will again suit up for Hapee in the 4 p.m. contest.

Reed Juntilla, Mark Borboran and Larry Rodriguez are expected to provide support for Norwood as Hapee tries to extend its streak to 10 games.

Al Vergara will spearhead the Harbour Centre squad which joined Hapee in claiming outright semifinal berths by nailing the top two slots in the elimination round.

"They have to play tough on both ends of the court to get past San Mig Coffee," said coach Jorge Gallent. "I expect Al to provide us again with the big lift."

The Coffee Kings did not have to use their twice-to-beat advantage after they blasted the Medics, 77-65, to earn the right to meet Harbour Centre.

"This is no longer the elims and this is one crucial stage that you have to play with all your heart," said Gallent. "Besides, we will be facing a different team now."

San Mig Coffee is bannered by San Beda's awesome threesome of Sam Ekwe, Pong Escobal and Ogie Menor, in the 2 p.m. tussle.

GAMES TODAY
(Rizal Memorial Coliseum)
2 p.m.—San Mig Coffee vs Harbour Centre
4 p.m.—Toyota Balintawak vs Hapee

The scores

TOYOTA BALINTAWAK 81—Sta. Maria 32, Casio 14, Dedicatoria 8, Jaime 8, Jazul 7, Villanueva 4, Faundo 4, Aldave 2, Sena 2, Hayes 0, Guerrero 0, Rodriguez 0.

MAIL & MORE 78—Arellano 15, Misa 13, David 11, Santos 9, Gregorio 7, Baracael 6, Canlas 5, Ballesteros 4, Bravo 3, Masbang 2, Bauzon 2, Bonus 1.

Quarters: 14-17, 35-34, 47-56, 70-70, 81-78

CHOLO Villanueva (No. 9) fights for possession against three Mail and More players. Villanueva's free throws helped Toyota seal a semifinal slot. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

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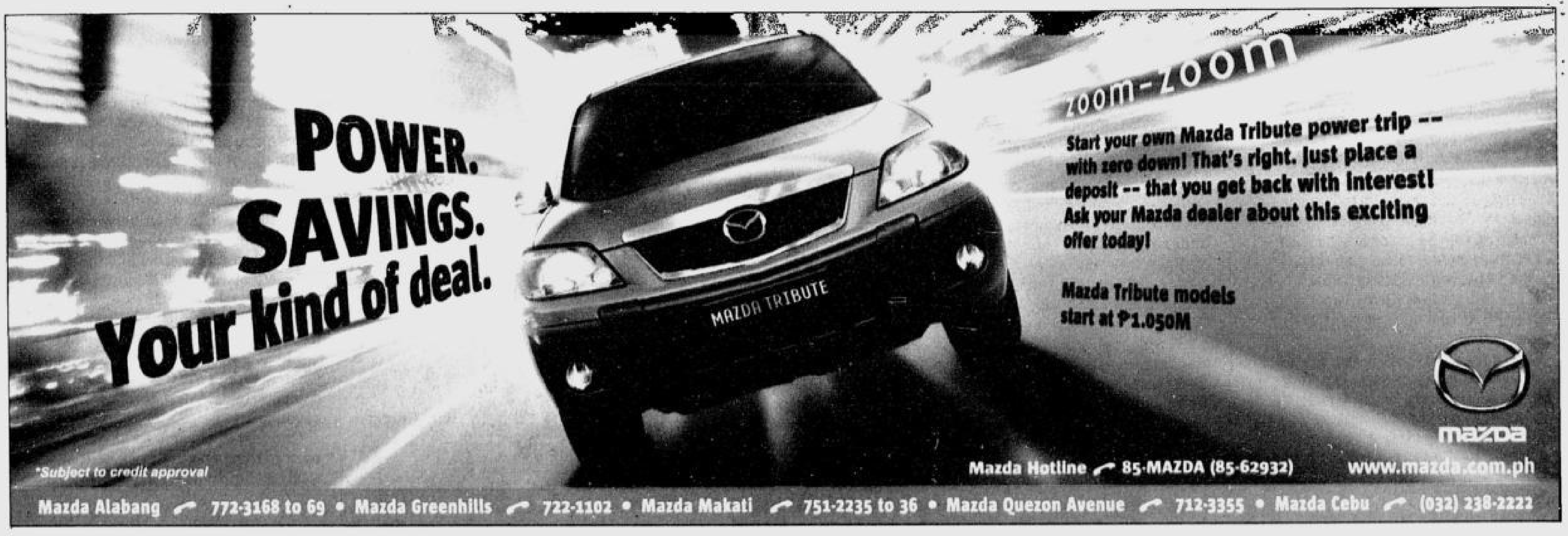

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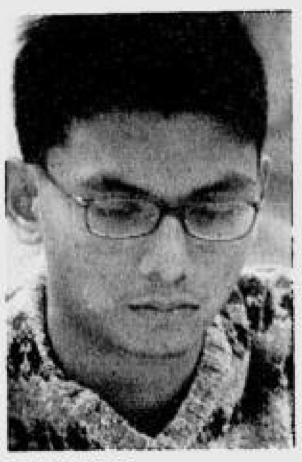
Sadorra notches fourth win, climbs to 2nd spot

Standings after five rounds:

5 points—Z. Azmaiparahsvili (Georgia); 4.5—**J. Sadorra (RP)**; 4—Z. Zhong (Singapore), C. Sandipan (India), S. Megaranto (Indonesia); 3.5—D. T. Hai (Vietnam), P.D. Girinath (India), Y. Wan (China), R. Laxman (India); 3—**M. Paragua (RP)**, **O. Dimakiling (RP)**, E. Paciencia (RP), S. Wu (China), G. Xiaobing (Singapore), N.A. Dung (Vietnam), A. Corke (HK), C. Lin (China), R. Li (China)


SADORRA

DIMAKILING

PARAGUA

SINGAPORE—INTERNATIONAL MASTER Julio Catalino Sadorra is on a roll and is keeping the sputtering Philippine campaign going in the 2007 Singapore Masters Open chess tournament.

Now based here, Sadorra posted smashing victories over Indian IMs RR Laxman of India in the fourth round and PDS Girintah in the fifth to raise his total to 4.5 points and grab solo second place behind Georgian Grandmaster Zurab Azmaiparashvili, who boasts a perfect 5.0 points.

Seeded second with his Elo of 2606, Azmaiparashvili will square off with Sadorra in a crucial sixth-round encounter.

The 21-year-old Sadorra, who earned his first GM result in the recent Prospero Pichay Cup held in Parañaque City, settled for a draw in the first round but swept his next four matches to take over from where countrymen GM Mark Paragua and IMs Oliver Dimakiling and Enrique Paciencia left off.

Paragua bowed to top seed GM Zhang Zhong of Singapore (Elo 2634) while Dimakiling and Paciencia yielded to Azmaiparasvili and Indonesian GM Susanto Megaranto, respectively, to remain at 3.0 points.

Zhong, a former member of China's national team, also dumped IM Jayson Gonzales in the fourth round to climb to 4.0 points.

The fourth-ranked Megaranto, who got ousted from the chess World Cup in the first round, matched Zhong's record by outclassing Paciencia in the fourth round.

Also with 4.0 points is Indian GM and No. 3 pick Chanda Sandipan, who trounced local bets GM Wu Shaobin and WGM Li Ruofan.

Dimakiling swept his first three assignments only to lose to Azmaiparashvili and Megaranto. Paciencia lost to Megaranto but won over WGM Nguyen Thi Tan An of Vietnam.

With only 2.0 points to show, Gonzales has dropped his bid for a third and final GM result.

Another Filipino hopeful, Rolando Andador, was in the same predicament after bowing to Fide Master Lim Yee Weng of Malaysia and beating FM Daniel Howard Fernandez of Singapore.

Marlon Bernardino, Contributor

I never took banned substances—Clemens

NEW YORK—ROGER CLEMENS DEnied allegations by his former trainer that he took performance-enhancing drugs, calling them "a dangerous and destructive shortcut that no athlete should ever take."

The accusations against the seven-time Cy Young Award winner from former trainer Brian McNamee were the most striking in last week's Mitchell Report on doping in Major League Baseball.

Former US senator George Mitchell said McNamee said he injected Clemens with steroids in 1998 while with the Toronto Blue Jays, and steroids and human growth hormone in 2000 and 2001, while with the New York Yankees.

"I want to state clearly and without qualification: I did not take steroids, human growth hormone or any other banned substances at any time in my baseball career or, in fact, my entire life," Clemens said on Tuesday in a statement issued through his agent, Randy Hendricks.

"Those substances represent a dangerous and destructive shortcut that no athlete should ever take.

"I am disappointed that my 25 years in public life have apparently not earned me the benefit of the doubt, but I understand that Sen. Mitchell's report has raised many serious questions.

I plan to publicly answer all of those questions at the appropriate time in the appropriate way. I only ask that in the meantime people not rush to judgment."

Another former McNamee client, Yankees pitcher Andy Pettitte, said last weekend that he took HGH twice while rehabbing from an injury in 2002. Mitchell said McNamee told him he injected Pettitte with HGH two-to-four times that year. *AP*

SPORTSWATCH

Derby 'Olympics' kicks off next year

THE WORLD SLASHER INVITATIONAL 8-Cock Derby, one of the biggest cockfighting events in the world, gets going next year at the Araneta Coliseum

Dubbed the Olympics of cockfighting, the event takes place on Jan. 29, 31, and Feb. 3.

"We are looking forward to a slasher event that will be long remembered," product manager Francis Martinez of the sponsoring Thunderbird Power Feeds said.

The bi-annual derby event brings together top sportsmen cockers from the United States, Canada, Mexico, Australia, Guam, Germany and Japan, challenging the country's top local gamefowl breeders.

Weight limits for all entries are a minimum of 1.9 kg and maximum of 2.5 kg (4 lbs. 3 oz. to 5 lbs. 8 oz.). Computerized blind matching will be strictly enforced for all fights.

The World Slasher Cup Invitational 8-Cock Derby is hosted by the Pintakasi of Champions. For details log on to www.aranetacoliseum.com and www.ticketnet.com.ph or call 9112928 or 9113101 loc. 8361 and 8351.

Mighty Menthols gain finals

THE MIGHTY MENTHOLS WENT TO Marvin Sioco and Edrick Ferrer at the most crucial stage of the game to down Sulpicio Lines, 95-88, and clinch a finals berth in the Manila Amateur Basketball League held recently at the Arellano gym in Manila.

Ferrer, a former University of the Philippines standout, topscored for the Mighty Menthols with 27 points but it was Sioco who made the difference. The sweet-shooting Sioco buried back-to-back triples as the Mighty Menthols finally pulled away for good. He finished with 10 points.

The Mighty Menthols go for the title today against Nougat Candy at 8 p.m. Eric Yao also shone for the Mighty Menthols as he also came through with big baskets with his one-on-one forays.

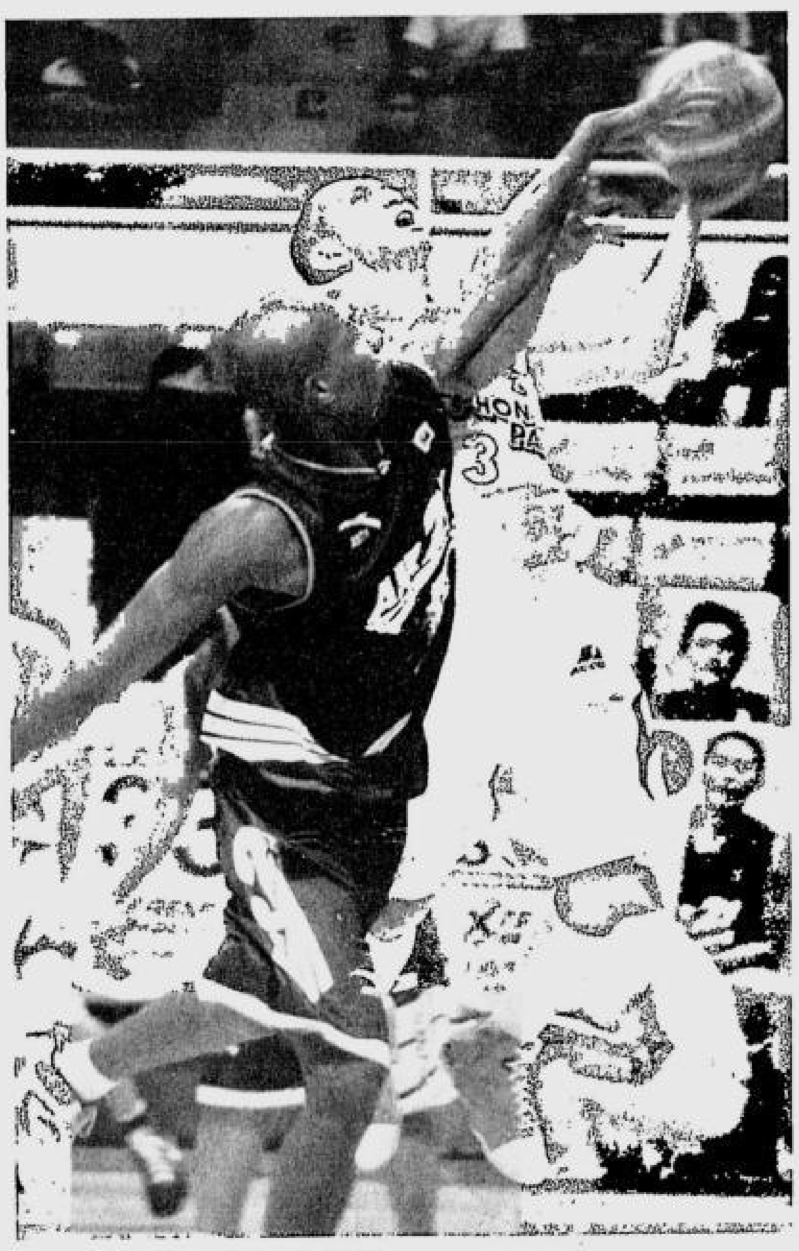
LPC hosts X'mas derby

BIGTIME COCKFIGHTING SHOWDOWN shifts to Las Piñas Coliseum today as the annual LPC Christmas 3-cock derby fires off at 5 p.m. with 94 matches scheduled.

LPC manager Alex Tobias, derby host, has the full backing of National Cockers Association (NCA) stalwart Gerry Ramos and 2007 NFGB "Bakbakan" runner-up Nene Aguilar.

Aside from Ramos and Aguilar, the lineup of participants include Benjie Lim, Tony Lasala, and *sabong* idol Patrick Antonio.

Meanwhile, Cris and Buda Villanueva won a brand new Honda Civic in last week's LPC Fastest Win One-Cock "Ulutan." For more info, please call 8731040, 8743910 and 0926-7450375.


NEW KID ON THE BLOCK
Gabby Espinas, acquired recently by Air21 from Magnolia, commits a hard foul on a driving Jimmy Alapag of Talk 'N Text in their game yesterday. *Story on A18.* RYAN LIM

NCRAA: Doves seize eighth straight victory

THE ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI COLLEGE Doves kept their poise in the endgame and survived the charge of the Philippine School of Business Administration Jaguars, 75-72, in the 15th Smart-National Capital Region Athletic Association (NCRAA) men's basketball tournament.

The Doves forced two crucial turnovers in the endgame, and then relied on the heroics of Leomer Losentes and Raymund Ilagan to seal their eighth straight triumph at the Emilio Aguinaldo College Sports Complex.

This solidified the Doves' grip on the solo lead as they dealt the Jaguars their second defeat in seven matches.

The Jaguars dropped to a share of second spot with PATTS School of Aeronautics with similar 5-2 records.

After PSBA tied the count at 72-all off Ferdie Santos' jump shot, the Doves forced the Jaguars into a pair of errors. The Jaguars turned the ball over twice, enabling Losentes and Ilagan to keep the Doves ahead by splitting their charities, 74-72, in the last 50 seconds.

Losentes tallied a game-high 19 points, while Ilagan drilled in 17.

Meanwhile, Gester Ebuen and Argel Mendoza scored key baskets in the last two minutes to key in the EAC Generals' 70-65 victory over defending champion Arellano University.

The Generals climbed to third spot with the Asian College of Science and Technology Lightnings with their 5-3 cards. The Chiefs are in fourth (4-3).

Mamiit's next target: Japan in Davis Cup

RETURNING FROM A WINNING stint in the Thailand Southeast Asian Games, Cecil Mamiit is now setting his sights on the Davis Cup competitions and even the Olympics as he hopes to continue to carrying the national colors internationally.

The Philippines, back in Group I of competition in the Davis Cup, takes on Asian heavyweight Japan here in Manila.

"It is our turn to play in our home court with a big local crowd cheering us on unlike in Thailand," Mamiit said. "At the same time, the weather here will be another factor as the Japanese players will be coming from cold weather."

Mamiit won the gold medal in the singles competition in the Thailand SEA Games.

Mamiit said the RP squad, managed by sportsman-businessman Jean Henri Lhuillier, benefited from the fact that the SEA Games was held in between the Davis Cup tie matches against Kuwait and Japan, saying "we had the opportunity to train and play together as a team."

"Right now i believe we have fifty-fifty chances but if we continue to work hard, we should be able to swing the odds in our favor, maybe 60-40 just before the matches," added Mamiit.

MAMIIT: Homecourt advantage RAFFY LERMA

Fight is now between Salud and Ramos

IN HUDDLE

Beth Celis

BETWEEN NOW and Jan. 10, the date when the PBA board reconvenes to select the next league commissioner, a lot of things can happen.

The original plan was to make the final choice last Dec. 17, the day the remaining three candidates presented to the governors their plans for the league should they be appointed.

But after about two hours of deliberation, the board still couldn't come up with a new commissioner. They went through three rounds of voting, but none of the three—which went down to two candidates in the second round—got the required minimum six votes.

To the media, "no news" is never good news, so everyone was disappointed when PBA officer in charge Sonny Barrios made his appearance at the lobby of the PBA office in Libis where the press was gathered to announce the result of the deliberation.

* * *

"Can we at least get the numbers?" asked a flabbergasted veteran scribe who had come to the PBA office early, prepared with a complete résumé of the candidate he had expected to win.

He wanted to know how many votes lawyer Chito Salud and former Nextel president Lambert Ramos each got.

It wasn't difficult to extrapolate though, that one got five votes, while the other got four. Because if one of them got three or less, then it means that the other got six, which is the minimum number of votes required to declare a winner.

What the rest of the members of the media wanted to know was, which teams voted for whom.

To review, the sequence of the presentation of candidates was done through a drawing of lots. It turned out to be in alphabetical order: Patrick Gregorio first, Lambert Ramos second, and Chito Salud third.

Each got 30 minutes to make his presentation. Each left immediately after the presentation.

Lunch followed, both for the board and the media. While deliberation was next on the agenda, personally, I was convinced that the governors had already made their choices even before the candidates made their presentations.

It wasn't long after the meeting that I found out how the teams voted. I was almost a hundred percent accurate in my speculation except for one franchise which was a big question mark.

Now, I'm sure you too would like to know how the teams voted.

Let's play a little game. I'll give you a clue.

Remember, one of the candidates got five votes, the other four.

The uniforms of the five teams are dominated by the color red, while those of the four are multi-colored.

Had the other candidate collected five votes after the second round of voting, he would have been declared commissioner.

Because one team from the red-colored group would have shifted his vote to the candidate of the multi-colored group in the third round of voting.

If I'm not being clear to you, that's not intentional.

The big surprise was the swing vote, which was expected by both opposing parties.

* * *

Pato Gregorio shouldn't feel too bad about being eliminated in the first round. I heard some governors speaking highly of his presentation.

Under the rules of the selection, the candidate with the lowest number of votes in the first round will be the first to get the boot and the executive director of the SBP was that candidate.

What might have gone against him was having two brothers in two different teams in the PBA.

Younger brother Allan is in the coaching staff of Air21 while Ryan is head coach of Purefoods.

Pato said God must have other plans for him.

Anyway, everyone is now wondering what step the PBA will take should the deadlock remain despite several rounds of voting on Jan. 10.

One governor said he doesn't even want to think about it, because that will spoil his Christmas.

Archers rip Eagles in match play opener, 8.5-3.5

TAGAYTAY—LA SALLE, DRAWING firepower from its youth brigade, dominated Ateneo in the first round of the La Salle-Ateneo Match Play 2007, winning eight while halving one of the 12 matches to seize control, 8.5-3.5, at the wind-raked Tagaytay Midlands yesterday.

The Archers kept the momentum of their solid start in the morning foursome matches with an equally impressive victory in fourball duels, giving the Taft-based squad a big headstart in the Ryder Cup-style event between two institutions with a storied basketball rivalry.

La Salle prevailed, 4-2, in the foursomes, and 4.5-1.5 in fourball.

Miko Yee, 15, and Chucky Hong combined splendidly in the foursome and fourball matches, beating Nejie Sarmiento and Bayani Garcia, 3 & 2, and repulsing the fancied pair of national amateur champion Anthony Fernando and Manoling Chan, 2-up, on a windy day at the tough, challenging par-72 layout.

Anya Tanpinco, the 24-year-old SEA Games silver medallist, also went two-for-two, teaming up with Kim Hong in thumping the Lovelyn Guioguio-Lana Farrales pair, 5 & 4, in the alternate shot format then linking up with Miko Alejandro in edging Jovi Neri and Guioguio in the better-ball duel.

Alejandro, 19, also swept his first two matches for La Salle, teaming up with Justine Limjap to edge the veteran pair of Iggy Clavecilla and Mari Hechanova, 4 & 3, in the foursome.

King Stehmeier likewise delivered two victories for the Archers. He partnered with Oliver Gan to humble Fernando and Joel Bernaldez, 2 & 1, in the morning match then joined Raffy Garcia in outlasting Junjun Plana and Jeric Hechanova, 2-up, in the afternoon.

"We were expecting a close match, especially in the foursome," said La Salle skipper Freddie Mendoza.

It was a fine start for the Archers, who are gunning for a third straight win over the Eagles after ruling the last two stagings of the event organized and hosted by Belle Corp. and Tagaytay Highlands.

Asia-Pacific seniors champion Tommy Manotoc and Oliver Gan underscored La Salle's solid start as they bounced back from one-hole down to draw level with Clavecilla and Mari Hechanova after 18 holes.

The two teams resume their foursome-fourball duels today with the Eagles, winner of the inaugural tournament in 2004, out to redeem themselves and turn the tables on their arch rivals. The singles matches will be played tomorrow.

Also winning for La Salle in the better-ball was the Bones Floro-Sammy Sy tandem, which beat Jingy Tuason and John Gobing, 3 & 2.

Marcel Puyat and Marty Ilagan starred for Ateneo, winning 4 & 3 over Sy and Floro in the alternate shot format and 2 & 1 over Justin Limjap and Jenz Tecson.

The event is backed by Solar Sports, Pisanti golf, Mezze Bistro & Bar, Reverie Communications Connections, American Eye Center, Raymundo's Awards and Trophies, Philippine Airlines, GG & A Club Shares, Ultraman Travel Corp., Quadro Frames, Pocari Sweat, Ideal Vision Center, Business Mirror and Crossover 105.1.

After SEAG, cycling eyes '12 London Olympics

BIGGER, BRIGHTER THINGS ARE COMING Philippine cycling's way after its impressive performance in the recent 24th Southeast Asian Games in Thailand where it bagged four gold medals.

The Philippine Sports Commission, through chair William Ramirez, has expressed willingness to fund the cyclists' training which may lead to a stint in the 2012 London Olympics.

ESPIRITU PDI PHOTO

An Olympic slot would require a rider to compete in as many UCI (Union Cycliste Internationale) races as possible. Such races are particularly staged in Europe and a few in Australia. UCI points are earned in every race regardless of the cyclist's finish.

But before a rider can qualify for UCI races, he must first join UCI training centers in Europe—specifically at the UCI World Cycling Center in Aigle, Switzerland—Melbourne and Sydney and Japan.

Malaysia and Indonesia, which won four gold medals out of the 11 offered in track, sent their riders to Australia and Switzerland.

Cycling emerged as the second most successful national sports association after swimming which produced eight gold medals.

Joey Barba bagged the country's first gold in mountain bike's men's downhill. Also winning were Victor Espiritu in men's points race, Alfie Catalan in men's individual pursuit of track and Marites Bitbit in the women's massed start of road race.

The planned preparation would be focused on the Asian championships, World Cup, World Championships and eventually, the 2012 Olympics.

The PSC will also refurbish the velodrome at the Amoranto Sports Complex in Quezon City. Only three other SEA countries have velodromes—Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand.

Orillana fuels Dolphins

GAMES SATURDAY *(Rizal Memorial Ballpark)*
9 a.m.—Exhibition game
1 p.m.—Manila vs Cebu (Game 2)

By Marc Anthony Reyes

ACE PITCHER JOSEPH ORILLANA spun a three-hitter to steer Cebu to a 6-3 triumph over Manila yesterday that moved the Dolphins to within a win of clinching the Baseball Philippines Series 2 championship at the Rizal Memorial ballpark.

Orillana, back from the Southeast Asian Games campaign where he was hardly used as the RP team's No. 4 pitcher, struck out five and contributed two doubles in the Dolphins' 15-hit attack against Manila's Charlie Labrador.

"Everything fell into place," said Isaac Bacarisas in Filipino. "The opponent is very tough because of its pitcher (Labrador) who is the top pitcher of the national team. Joseph is just fourth in the rank but he was able to adjust."

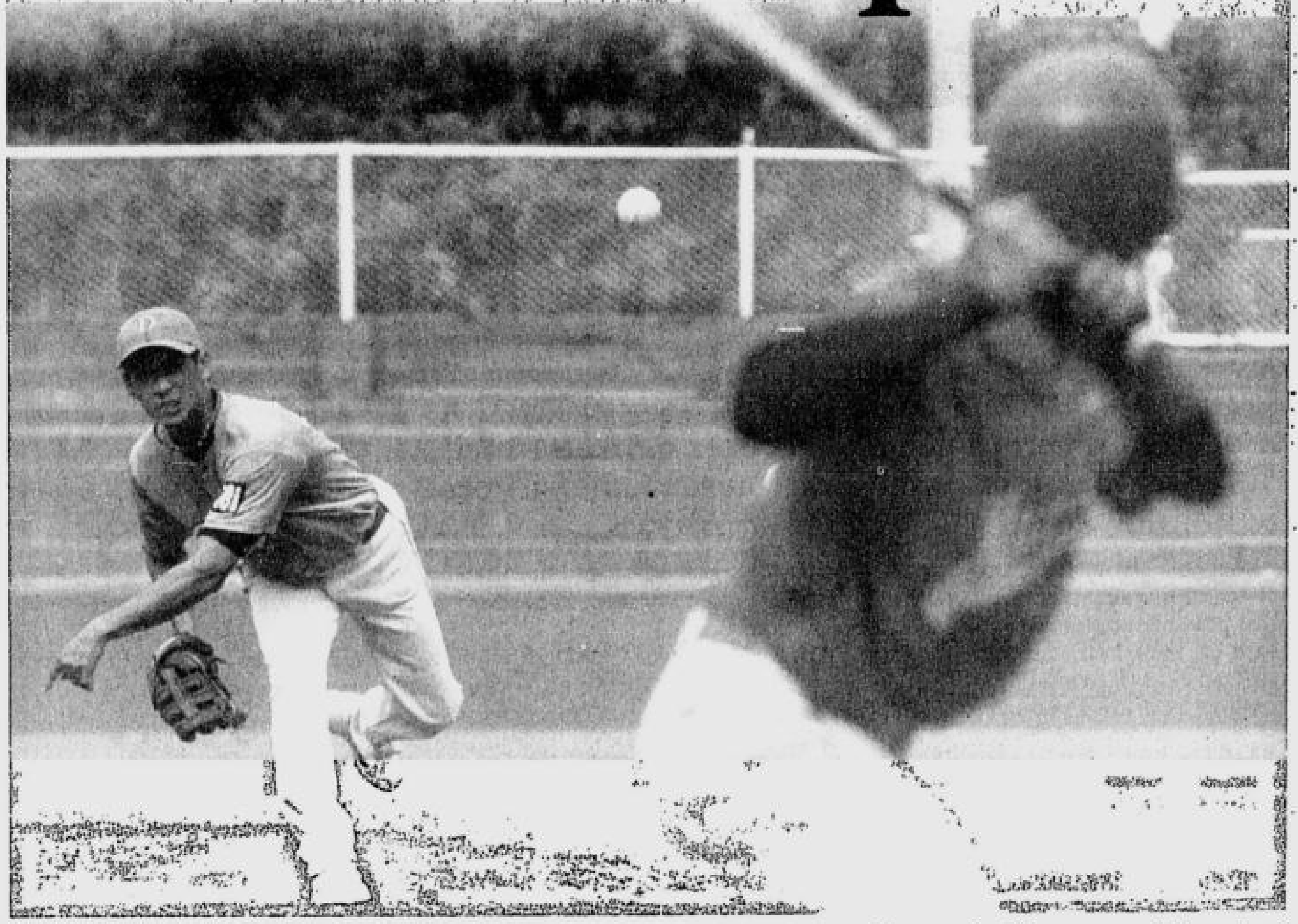
The Dolphins, fourth placers during the inaugural tournament of the Pilot Series, can wrap up the title with a win on Saturday also at the same Rizal venue.

The game stood at 1-all on top of the eighth inning when the Dolphins struck for three runs after two outs to take a 4-1 lead.

Miggy Corcuera finally got to Labrador with a single to left that scored Jonash Ponce, who had earlier doubled.

"I wonder why they didn't walk Corcuera when he has a dangerous swing," mused Bacarisas later.

Second base Emerson Atilano sent Corcuera to third with another double and the Sharks decided to walk Orillana and try their luck against Jerome Bacarisas, who had fanned out earlier.


CEBU Dolphins' Joseph Orillana pitches against the Manila Sharks. Orillana's three-hitter pushed his team to within a win of the Baseball Philippines 2 crown. RYAN LIM

Wrong move.

The Cebu manager's son rose to the occasion, doubling home Atilano and Corcuera before Jon de Ubago flied out to end the inning.

Manila responded with two runs in the lower half of the eighth with Nino Tator, last conference's best hitter, smashing a two-bagger after two outs to score Larry Icban and Rommel Roja that pruned Cebu's lead to 4-3.

After Edward Landicho was intentionally walked to fill the bases, Orillana quelled the threat by striking out Marvin Malig.

UST spikers fan streak, cream Lady Maroons

GAMES JANUARY 9 *(Blue Eagle Gym)*
8 a.m.—NU vs UST (women)
10 a.m.—ADMU vs AdU (women)
2 p.m.—UE vs UP (women)
4 p.m.—DLSU vs FEU (women)

UNIVERSITY OF SANTO TOMAS' TItle-retention bid is on the right track after beating University of the Philippines, 25-19, 25-16, 25-19, yesterday for its fourth straight win in the UAAP women's volleyball tournament at the Blue Eagle Gym.

Reigning Most Valuable Player Venus Bernal and Mary Jean Balse had a combined output of 31 points as the unbeaten Tigresses retained the tournament lead.

Bernal poured 16 of her game-high 18 points from attacks while Balse added 13.

"It's a good win going into our break," said UST coach August Sta. Maria, referring to the three-week Christmas break. "I'm glad Balse and Bernal stepped up because one of our key players, Angeli Tabaquero, has fever."

In the other game, Ateneo notched its second straight win at the expense of University of the East, 25-22, 24-26, 25-18, 25-18.

The Lady Eagles improved to 3-1 while the Red Skirts, like the Lady Maroons, have yet to win in four matches.

Rookie Kara Acevedo made all her 20 points off attack while Patti Taganas added 12. Charo Soriano, the league's leading scorer, had a slow start but still came up with 17 markers.

Ateneo had a sluggish second frame with only Acevedo, Soriano and Patti Taganas working double time to thwart UE to no avail.

The Red Skirts were led by Kat Rivera who finished with 10 points while Joy Tan chipped in seven markers.

Women's volleyball action resumes on Jan. 9.

Gomez bags S'woods tilt via net 62

JAVIER GOMEZ BREACHED THE scoring limit of 10-under-par 62 in winning the overall net title even as Benjie Sarmiento showed why he's the club champion by taking the low gross plum in the recent Chairman's Cup of the Manila Southwoods Golf and Country Club.

Gomez, a 19-handicapper playing in Seniors Group 2, fired a gross of 81 for a net 61 but competition rules peg the limit below par at 62. Sarmiento carded a 70 to beat Edmund Yee by two shots for the low gross trophy of the tourney honoring MSGCC chairman of the board Robert John Sobrepeña.

Yee settled for the Class A crown, beating Raphael Juan and Hae Sung Choi by two.

Jose Cervantes, Jed Rosero, Nobuhiro Takezawa, Roland dela Cruz, Eun Hee Suk, Teresita San Juan, Ray Orozco and Joe Faustino grabbed the other titles at stake.

Cervantes netted a 67 to win the Class B crown, Rosero's 65 won him Class C , Takezawa was the Class D winner and dela Cruz (64) claimed Class E. Suk (69) and San Juan (62) took the ladies Group 1 and Group 2, respectively, while Orozco and Faustino were the seniors champions.

Camp John Hay Manor/Golf Club, First Asia Mobile, Inc., Makati Shangri-La , Golden Oats, Golforce, Manila Jockey, Mejore, Rizgolf, Southwoods Manor, MRT and Warbird Security backed the event as major sponsors.

Tiger keeps his spectacular shots to a minimum, but goes on winning

WOODS: Nothing dramatic AFP

THOUSAND OAKS, CALIFORNIA—The maturation of Tiger Woods includes one new aspect of his game: He's become boring.

The trained eye can still see greatness from a difficult shot that Woods can make look easy. Perhaps his most impressive round of golf was on the Saturday at the US Open when he hit the first 17 greens in regulation at Oakmont (and had to settle for a 69).

And there is no denying the results.

Woods again dwarfed the competition this year with seven US PGA Tour victories, his 13th career major, skipping the opening playoff event and still taking the drama out of the new FedEx Cup, and collecting two more World Golf Championships to make him 14-of-25 against the world's best.

But where was the spectacular shot that defines a special year?

One exercise to wrap up a season is to ask the major champions for the shot that people remember about their victory, and a shot that might get overlooked but was meaningful to them.

Two years ago, it was Woods' chip-in for birdie on the 16th hole at the Masters, which made a U-turn and hung on the lip before falling. Last year was a 4-iron he holed out for eagle on the 14th hole at Royal Liverpool.

What will people remember about his victory this year in the US PGA Championship?

Record missed

"Hmmm," Woods said, contemplating almost long enough to grow a goatee.

He settled on a shot he missed, a 15-foot birdie putt on the 18th hole of the second round at Southern Hills that spun 270 degrees out of the cup and forced him to settle for a 63, tying a major championship record.

"If you think about it, I had a chance to break a record," he said. "Otherwise, I didn't do anything the entire week that stood out, except to be consistent. But I think the nature of the course lent itself to that."

As for the best shot, Woods didn't hesitate.

"The drive on 16," he said. "I just flushed it."

Woods' lead was as large as five in the final round, but it was down to one over Woody Austin—until he birdied the 15th hole. Then came the tightest driving hole at Southern Hills, and Woods hit it so pure that he twirled the club, the sure sign of a perfect strike.

"Woody was ahead of me and I didn't know what he was doing on 17, which is a birdie hole," Woods said. "I needed to put that ball in play and not make bogey. I'll tell you what, to step up there have to put it in play and I just piped it down the middle."

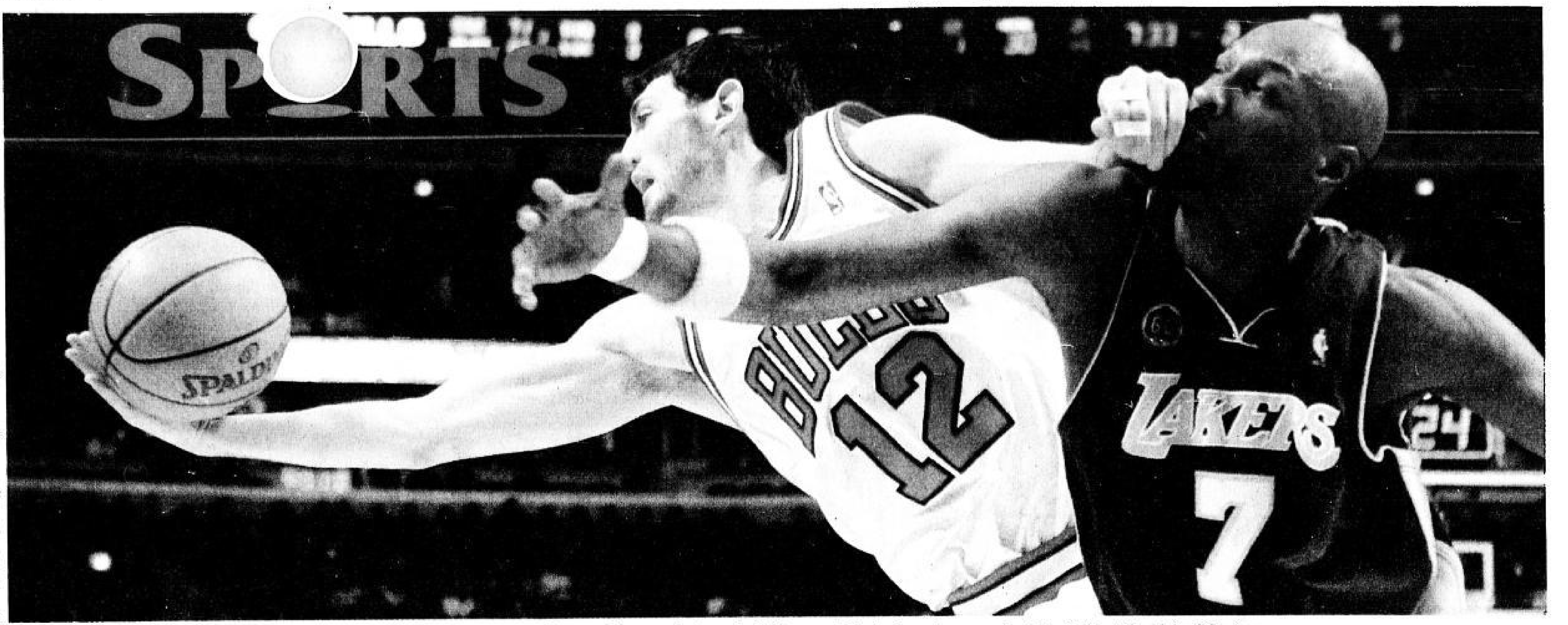
That was as exciting as it got for Woods, one of the most exciting players in the game.

As he has gotten older—and better—Woods has so much more control of his game that he rarely has to do anything dramatic.

There is no 6-iron out of the bunker, over the water and right at the flag with the tournament on the line. Or a 3-iron over the trees to 15 feet despite his legs pressed up against the side of a sand trap. Or a 7-iron gouged out of the rough on the sixth hole of Pebble Beach that reaches the green in two. Or the hole-in-one that nearly caused a riot in Phoenix.

"He's playing more from the correct side of the fairway now," caddie Steve Williams said.

That supports an adage in golf that some of the most thrilling shots usually follow some of the worst. One reason Arnold Palmer and Seve Ballesteros were so exciting to watch was because of the spots from which they played, parking lots included. *AP*



CHICAGO Bulls guard Kirk Hinrich (left) beats Los Angeles Lakers forward Lamar Odom to the loose ball. Omar and the Lakers, however, beat the Bulls at the United Center. REUTERS

Lakers rip Bulls; Kings triumph

CHICAGO—THE LOS ANGELES LAKERS PUT ON A strong team performance to register a 103-91 road win over the Chicago Bulls on Tuesday, the visitors getting double-digit tallies from six players.

With Kobe Bryant struggling through a 7-for-19 shooting night while playing with a troublesome groin, Sasha Vujacic came off the bench to score 19 points and lead a balanced attack.

"People call us a one-man (Bryant) team and we don't care as long as we're winning ballgames," Lakers forward Luke Walton told reporters.

"If we start losing, then we'll get mad and we'll get up in arms about it."

Bryant finished with 18 points, Lamar Odom had 17 points and 16 rebounds and Andrew Bynum also had a double-double, with 12 points and 10 rebounds to go along with four blocks.

"As eye-popping as Kobe's numbers are, the reason they have the record they do (15-9) is because all the other guys are playing well," Bulls coach Scott Skiles said.

Luol Deng had 26 points and seven rebounds and Kirk Hinrich 17 points, eight assists and five rebounds for the Bulls, who were talking to the Lakers about acquiring Bryant before the start of the season.

In East Rutherford, New Jersey, John Salmons scored a career-high 31 points and passed to teammate Francisco Garcia for a decisive 3-pointer to lead the Sacramento Kings over the Nets, 106-101.

The Kings got their second road win of the season—and second in five days.

New Jersey has lost six of its past seven games and eight of 10 at home. Sean Williams had eight blocked shots, tying a team rookie record set in 1981 by Mike Gminski.

In Los Angeles, Chris Bosh scored 12 of his 24 points in the third quarter to help the Toronto Raptors take the lead for good and down the Clippers, 80-77.

Bosh also had nine rebounds to become the Raptors' career leader. His 2,847 betters Antonio Davis' mark of 2,839.

Meanwhile, in Miami, Shaquille O'Neal sees his personal and his team's struggles as just another test.

His 14.3 points-per-game average is, by far, the lowest of his career. His Miami Heat are 7-17, one of the worst records in the NBA, and look nothing like the team that won a championship 18 months ago. His leg hurts, his pride aches and he knows that, at 35 years old, many believe he's finished.

Shaq keeps the faith

Not surprisingly, O'Neal, a four-time NBA champion, begs to differ.

He still believes in the Heat and, perhaps most important, he still believes in himself.

"Do I feel tested? Yeah," O'Neal said on Tuesday. "I'll either pass or fail. That's why they call it a test."

O'Neal had 15 points and eight rebounds on Monday in Miami's 91-87 win over the woebegone Minnesota Timberwolves, a game in which the Heat had to dig deep in the final minutes to prevail at home over the NBA's worst road team.

Numbers-wise, even though he fouled out, it was among his better games this season. But his assessment?

"Terrible," O'Neal said.

He scoffs at the notion that his days as a dominant big man are done. Sure, he's not an MVP candidate any more, and Dwyane Wade—not O'Neal—has been Miami's most vital scoring option in recent seasons. But he's almost defiant in his insistence that if given more shots, he would be more effective.

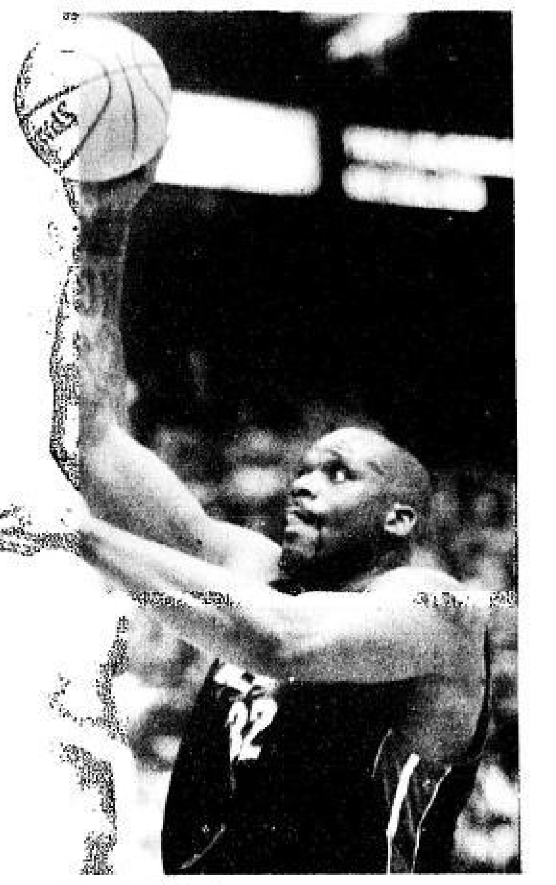
O'Neal is averaging 10 shot attempts per game. Asked how many he wants, he wouldn't give a specific number.

"More than 10, so I can get into the game," O'Neal said. "My son can't even get into a game with seven shots."

Heat coach Pat Riley has resisted changing the Heat offensive philosophy and still considers O'Neal an extremely important part of the attack, even as the numbers decline.

The thinking there is simple—he still believes in O'Neal.

"You know who Shaq is," Riley said. "He's an affable guy. He was Superman. I mean, he was indestructible, unstoppable, all those things. But as he gets a little bit older and things slow down, he still can be very effective." *AP, Reuters*



O'NEAL: I still believe AP

Kobe finally cured of 'Chicago Fever'

CHICAGO—KOBE BRYANT caught "Chicago Fever" in October.

He seemed to be cured of the affliction by Tuesday night, his first appearance at the United Center since his unsuccessful bid to coax the Lakers into trading him.

When the trade didn't happen, when the Bulls and Lakers couldn't work out a deal during training camp, Bryant put on his purple-and-gold uniform and returned to work.

How close the teams were to completing a multi-player trade was open to debate, however.

Chicago GM John Paxson said in early November that it was never close to happening, contradicting numerous Internet reports.

Bryant has been loathe to rehash the events of the offseason, when he asked to be traded, or the early days of training camp, when team owner Jerry Buss said the Lakers would consider offers for the superstar guard.

Asked Tuesday if he was pleased by the way things worked out for him and the Lakers, Bryant repeated his 2007-08 mantra.

"I'm having a great time," he said.

When someone wondered what it was that attracted him to Chicago in the first place, Bryant joked, "Pizza. Deep-dish pizza."

Bryant also said he had no interest in holding out and forcing the Lakers to trade him.

"I just love playing so much," he said. "My teammates, we're like brothers. We all get along extremely well, so it would be very unfair to them to do something like that."

It was the opinion of Lakers coach Phil Jackson that Bryant had "Chicago Fever" during training camp, but that it ended once the regular season began Oct. 30. Jackson said he hasn't seen any signs of it since opening night.

Jackson said playing in Chicago might ignite some old feelings for Bryant.

"There will be some emotions about it," Jackson said. "I'm not sure how it's going to go. I'm sure he wants to do well. He actually had a desire to be here and tried to fulfill that. It was an awful longshot from the beginning."

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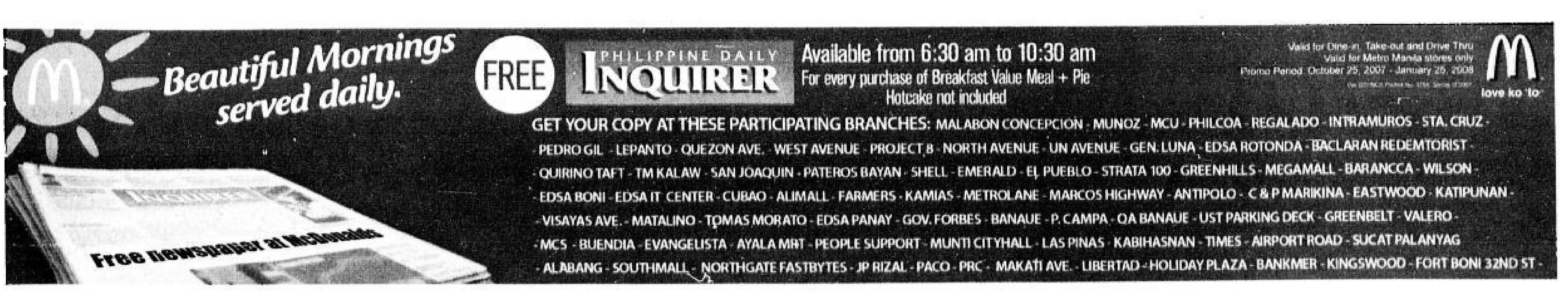
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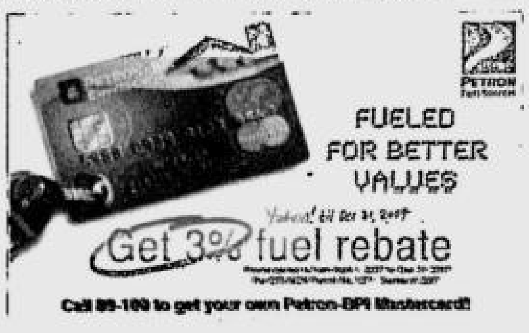

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Ayala Land joins John Hay consortium

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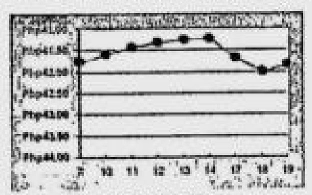

DECEMBER

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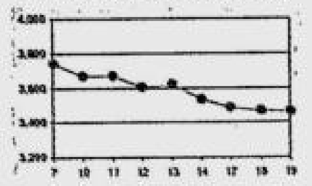
STOCK MARKET

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



DECEMBER

(See stock market report on Page B6)

Stocks end lower

SHARE PRICES CLOSED 0.1 PERCENT lower yesterday despite a positive overnight performance by Wall Street, dealers said.

The composite index finished down 3.93 points at 3,466.28 points. The broader all-share index lost 0.62 points to end at 2,136.80.

Volume was 1.1 billion shares worth P3.5 billion.

"Investors just moved sideways," said Lawrence de Leon of Accord Capital Equities. "They are still jittery about the volatility in global financial markets, and Wall Street's modest rally was not enough to convince them to buy up more shares."

STOCKS/ B2

Entry resurrects beleaguered Baguio leisure project

By Vincent Cabreza
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BAGUIO CITY—THE AYalas are the new partners of Fil Estate-owned Camp John Hay Development Corp. (CJHDevco), which has been fighting to sustain its leisure estate project here since 1996.

Officials of John Hay Management Corp. (JHMC) confirmed that Ayala has joined the John Hay consortium, promising to foot some of CJHDevco's rent liabilities, which have been estimated to have grown to at least P2.3 billion since 2005.

A formal announcement of the new venture is expected this month.

The CJHDevco officials begged off from discussing Ayala's participation in John Hay.

"We have to wait for the Office of the Government Corporate Counsel (OGCC) to review the renegotiated contracts between CJHDevco and the Bases Conversion Development Authority (BCDA) before we can announce the new agreements," a CJHDevco statement said.

But sources from both CJHDevco and the JHMC, who asked not to be identified because they were not authorized to speak on the project, said Ayala's entry has resurrected the beleaguered John Hay project.

Ayala Land Inc. (ALI) is coming in as a joint-venture partner for a still undisclosed CJHDevco property, which would host a business outsourcing facility.

Ayala is also taking over the CJHDevco's entertainment cluster project and will build a strip mall, the sources said.

A CJHDevco official said sister companies Fil Estate Urban and Fil Estate Land would pour in fresh capital to complete the construction of the 280-room John Hay Suites, as well as leisure cottages already programmed for 2008.

The JHMC source said Ayala originally offered to cover for all of CJHDevco's liabilities.

"The money would have been issued upfront to JHMC, so (the city government) can have access to its share immediately, but I have no idea

AYALA/ B6

PSALM postpones sale of power assets to 2008

By Abigail L. Ho

POWER SECTOR ASSETS AND LIABILITIES Management Corp. has finally made a formal announcement that it will move the bidding for the 192.5-megawatt (MW) Palinpinon geothermal and 146.5-MW Panay diesel power plant package to next year.

The government agency said in a statement that it hoped to bid out the power plant package within the first quarter.

PSALM said it was still in discussions with PNOC Energy Development Corp. regarding possible amendments to the steam supply agreement, now referred to as the geothermal resource supply contract (GRSC), that would be attached to the plant.

The GRSC would ensure the winning bidder for the plant of steady steam supply.

The long-term GRSC will take into consideration some issues that the Joint Congressional Power Commission had raised.

"PSALM will use this opportunity to address comments of investor groups on the GRSC, thus enhancing the value of the plant package," PSALM said in its statement.

In an earlier interview, PSALM vice president for asset management and electricity trading Froilan Tampinco said PSALM had

PSALM/ B6

IN THIS ISSUE

▨ **Oriental** Peninsula stocks up 19% on listing debut /B6

▨ **SSS net** income surged to P16.17B as of Sept. /B7

Privatization seen to yield ₱30B next year

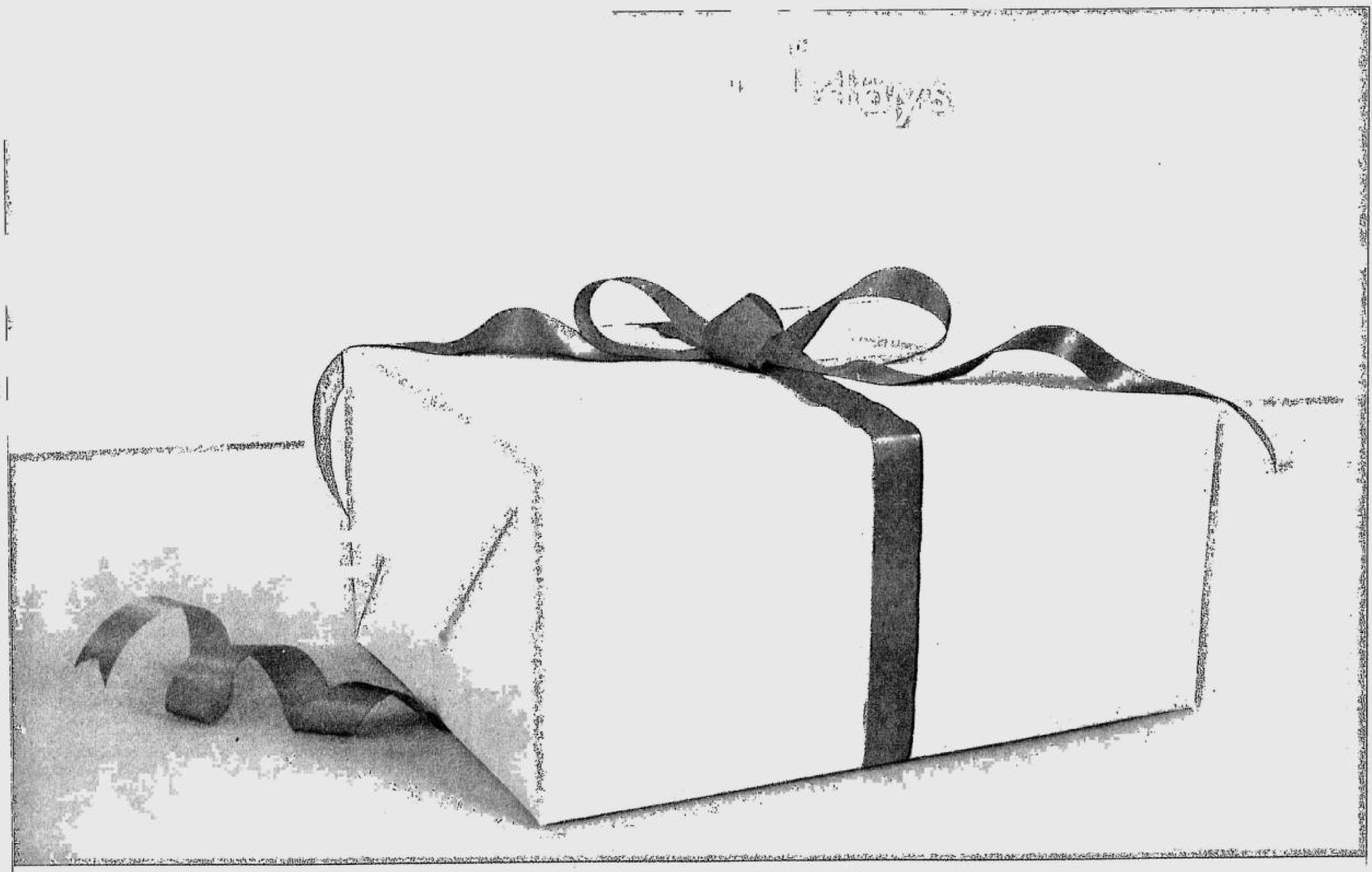
By Michelle V. Remo

THE GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO GO slow on privatization next year and refocus revenue-generation efforts on tax collection, which has been anemic this year partly because of collecting agencies' inefficiency.

"We are programming less privatization revenues. We want to make sure that the tax effort will improve next year," Finance Secretary Margarito Teves told reporters.

The Department of Finance set a target of raising P30 billion from privatization

PRIVATIZATION/ B6



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Killer bill

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III

EVERYBODY SEEMS TO BE against the move in the House of Representatives to amend the Epira, and yet this lovable group of congressmen insists on doing it.

Why? Do they think that they know better than the rest of us? Possible. But is it also possible there are hundreds of millions of other reasons in coal contracts?

Anyway, the House energy committee led by the son of the Lola at the Palace, Rep. Mikey Arroyo, recently railroaded a resolution to mangle the Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001, or the Epira, after conducting only three hearings, which were called on short notices.

In effect, the magnificent House energy committee wanted to lower the threshold of privatization of Napocor power generating assets from 70 percent (in the original Epira) to only 50 percent.

Our beloved Napocor, which enjoys the distinction of having buried the entire nation in billions of dollars of indebtedness, still controls more than 80 percent of the power generating assets of this country.

After all, the Philippines can only boast of having the second highest electricity rates in the whole of Asia.

***

Epira specifies five conditions to begin the so-called open access system in the power sector, which is similar to the free trading mode in the stock exchanges.

Guess what—the only unmet condition is the privatization of at least 70 percent of the power generating assets of Napocor.

And it's not as if the sale of those assets is bad for us. No, your honorable sirs, on the contrary!

For instance, Jose Ibazeta, president of the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management (PSALM), just announced that the government was now ready to pay—IN ADVANCE—some $1 billion of its foreign debts as a result of the successful sale of Napocor's power plants.

Now, you do the math on our savings in interest payments on those debts!

***

Recently, the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Philippines Inc. (JCCIPI) was added to the long list of groups against the Epira amendment.

But who are they, right? The Japanese are only the biggest foreign investors in the country, accounting for more than 60 percent of the total foreign investments here.

The JCCIPI position is that Napocor's virtual control of the power sector will only worsen the problem of high electricity rates.

Thus the Japanese businessmen urged the Lola at the Palace to implement the Epira, instead of amending it.

***

Here is what JCCIPI president Toshifumi Inami said in a letter to the Lola last Dec. 14:

"We believe that amending Epira now would reverse the gains of your power reforms thus far and endanger investment confidence.

"Instead, we encourage the government to be steadfast with full and proper implementation of Epira to achieve its primary objectives of providing a competitive and vibrant electricity industry that can play its role in making the Philippines competitive."

***

Following are the other groups against the amendment:

Philippine Independent Power Producers Association; the Semiconductors and Electronics Industry of the Philippines Inc. (Seipi); the Philippine Independent Power Producers Association Inc. (Pippa), the Philippine Electric Plant Owners Association (Pepoa); the Joint Foreign Chambers Joint Foreign Chambers (JFC)—which is made up of American Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines Inc.; Australian-New Zealand Chamber of the Philippines Inc.; Canadian Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines Inc.; European Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines Inc.; Japanese Chamber of Commerce & Industry of the Philippines Inc.; Korean Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines Inc.; and the Philippine Association of Multinational Companies Regional Headquarters Inc.

Look—all those people put their money where their mouths were, and they invested heavily in this country.

And so why is that lovable group of congressmen, led by the presidential son, insisting on doing the exact opposite?

Don't tell me they are deaf!

***

Rep. Pablo Garcia (Cebu) is still trying to solve the mystery of another bill called "Cheaper Medicines Bill."

Under the existing Intellectual Property Code (IPC), the government can already import medicine—even without the consent of the patent holder—in the name of ... well, "public interest."

Yet the bill states that the government can only import during a "state of national emergency."

Garcia thus cannot understand the need for such a provision. The mysterious requirement only makes it hard for the government to import cheaper drugs.

Wonder no more, dear sir, because for sure the provision will benefit the multinational drug companies.

As Garcia noted, the government's drug importation will always require that Malacañang should first declare a state of national emergency.

That does not happen every day.

To Garcia, another "objectionable feature" of the bill is the creation of what he called a "bureaucratic super-body" (official name "Drug Price Regulation Board"), which is not found in the Senate version.

Garcia said, if this super-body has the absolute power to fix the retail prices of drugs and medicines, including the patented drugs, there is no need for the other provisions at all.

In other words, the "super-body" can impose its pricing on the free market, right?

Sagittarius puts up butterfly sanctuary

By Amy R. Remo

SAGITTARIUS MINES INC. HAS proven that mining operations and caring for the environment can go hand in hand.

SMI, which is into gold and copper mining in Tampakan, South Cotabato, has opened a terrarium and butterfly garden in the lobby of the main office of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in Quezon City.

"The opening of this terrarium and butterfly garden would show visitors of the DENR a concrete example of how mining companies protect and even sustain the environment, even though they are very much engaged in digging for minerals in their host communities," said Environment Secretary Lito Atienza.

Atienza added that while the government was making an all-out effort to create a strong and healthy mining industry, it was also making sure that the environment would be well taken care of.

"Mining activities and caring for the environment are now among the programs of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. This is also the direction that the DENR is trying to follow," he said.

Under the revitalized mining industry program, the DENR requires mining companies to implement extensive environmental programs even during the prefeasibility phase of operations in order to ensure the protection of the environment and biodiversity.

SMI's terrarium, which is on loan to DENR, features stick insects and millipedes from Tampakan.

Some of the species at the exhibit are being bred by SMI as part of the mining firm's effort to preserve biodiversity in the forest habitat.

Atienza said what was significant about SMI's butterfly and insect breeding project was that it concretely shows that it can also provide alternative livelihood to community members.

During its pre-feasibility stage, Sagittarius has already been providing annual community development assistance to the project's host communities in South Cotabato.

Funds have been used to implement various education, community health, livelihood, small infrastructure and capability-building programs.

For instance, while the B'laan in Tampakan used to be the most marginalized indigenous group in the region, all of the B'laan children are now going to school.

These children would be supported until they complete their college education.

Through Sagittarius' education assistance program, more than 8,000 scholars have so far been sent to school.

The older population can also benefit through Sagittarius' adult literacy program.

Roughly P9 million is spent yearly for these programs, as well as for schoolhouse rehabilitation and teachers' salaries.

Stocks end lower

From page B1

Analysts said a move by major central banks to pump more money into the financial system amid a debilitating credit crunch had given investors little cheer.

"While the intention is to stimulate the faltering US economy, these moves also acknowledge a much bigger problem—to what extent is not known—and that inspires little confidence," said Jose Vistan of AB Capital Securities.

Mall operator SM Prime Holdings Inc. dropped 50 centavos to P10.

Property developer Ayala Land Inc. slipped 25 centavos to P14. Homebuilder Megaworld Corp. lost five centavos to P3.75. Conglomerate Ayala Corp. fell P5 to P495.

Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co., the country's biggest bank by assets, advanced 50 centavos to P53. Banco de Oro-EPCI, the second biggest bank, added 50 centavos to P58.

Index leader Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. closed flat at P3,000.

San Miguel Corp. saw its "A" shares rise 50 centavos to P59.50 while its "B" shares were unchanged at P59.50. *AFP*

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NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT SUBIC BAY GOLF AND COUNTRY CLUB, INC. IS TEMPORARILY CLOSED AND UNIVERSAL INTERNATIONAL GROUP DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION TEMPORARILY STOPPED ITS OPERATIONS DUE TO THE TAKEOVER BY SBMA OF ITS LEASED PREMISES DESPITE WRIT OF PRELIMINARY INJUNCTION.

ANY TRANSACTION INVOLVING THE SALE OR LEASE OF THE PROPERTIES AND LEASE PREMISES OF SUBIC BAY GOLF AND COUNTRY CLUB, INC. AND UNIVERSAL INTERNATIONAL GROUP DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION SHALL BE HELD IN ABEYANCE UNTIL CIVIL CASE NO. 456-0-06 RESOLVED WITH FINALITY.

SUBIC BAY GOLF AND COUNTRY CLUB, INC.
UNIVERSAL INTERNATIONAL GROUP DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

(PDI – December 20, 2007)

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT
National Capital Region
DY Int'l Bldg., 1650 San Marcelino
cor. General Malvar St., Malate, Manila

NOTICE OF FILING OF APPLICATION/S FOR ALIEN EMPLOYMENT PERMIT/S (AEP/S)

Notice is hereby given that the following companies/employers have filed with this Regional Office application/s for Alien Employment Permit/s:

Name and address of Company/Employer	Name of Foreign National / Citizenship	Position
C&G GOLF PHILIPPINES INC. Unit 105 Residencia 888 Pearl Drive, Ortigas Center, Pasig City	Jungil Lee (w/o Baik) Korean	General Manager
GLAMOUR PLUS NAIL ART & FACIAL SERVICE CO. Unit 202 2/F Josefa Bldg., 1750 M. Adriatico St., Malate, Manila	Liangjie Lin Chinese	Store Manager
LIST & MAIL EXCHANGE CORP. G/F B. Reyes Bldg., 918 Aurora Blvd., Quezon City	Derrick Thomas Davidson American	Managing Director
YIHRONG TRADING CORPORATION 8 21st Ave. cor. P. Tuazon, Cubao, Quezon City	Chun-Hsiao Li Taiwanese	President
MT. ALPOS MACHINERY BUILDERS CORP. Cluster 1 Unit 104 Isabelle Garden Villas, E. Rodriguez Ave., Moonwalk, Parañaque City	Hiroshi Iwata Japanese	General Manager
KHO-WOONG INTERNATIONAL FREIGHT CORPORATION Unit UG12 Cityland Cond. 8, 98 Sen. Gil Puyat Ave., Makati City	Kyujung Choi Korean	Assistant Manager
PEOPLESUPPORT (PHILIPPINES) INC. PeopleSupport Center, Ayala Ave. cor. Gil Puyat Ave., Makati City	Axchilles Durand Berry American	Director for Operations
EEP PHONE ENGLISH SYSTEM, INC. 1040 EDSA Magallanes Village, Makati City	Ji Hee Kim Korean	Account Officer
JPMORGAN CHASE BANK, N.A. - PHIL. CUSTOMER CARE CENTER 31/F, Philamlife Tower, Paseo de Roxas, Makati City	Innocent John Indian	Servicing Operations Manager

If you have any information/objection to the above mentioned application/s please communicate with the Regional Director.

RAYMUNDO G. AGRAVANTE
OIC, Regional Director

(PDI – December 20, 2007)

LAND BANK OF THE PHILIPPINES
1598 M. H. del Pilar corner Dr. J. Quintos Streets, Malate, Manila
Tel. Nos. 522-0000; 526-0100 connecting all departments

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Land Bank of the Philippines invites suppliers/manufacturers/distributors/contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the projects as stated below:

Item / Description	Approved Budget	Date/Time		Non-Refundable Fee
		Pre-Bid Conference	Deadline/ Opening of Bids	
1 Lot Soil Improvement/ Stabilization of the proposed LBP Malaybalay Office Building Construction Located at M. Fortich Street, Malaybalay City, Bukidnon (Adjacent to G. Tabios Building)	P2,300,000.00	January 10, 2008 9:00 AM	January 23, 2008 1:00 PM	P 1,200.00
1 Lot Backfiling of Documents of Various Head Office Units for the Document Imaging System Project	P3,300,000.00	January 10, 2008 2:00 PM	January 23, 2008 1:00 PM	P 1,700.00
200 Units Dot Matrix Printer	P6,690,000.00	January 10, 2008 10:00 AM	January 23, 2008 1:00 PM	P 3,400.00

The Bid Documents shall be available at the Procurement Department starting December 20, 2007 upon payment of non-refundable fees indicated above.

A Pre-bid conference will be held at Procurement Department Bidding Room, 25th Floor, LANDBANK Plaza, 1598 M. H. del Pilar cor. Dr. J. Quintos Sts., Malate, Manila, at the time and date indicated above.

Please address your queries to the Head-Secretariat, Bids and Awards Committee, or call 405-7370; 551-0000 local 7370.

LANDBANK reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder(s).

BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE

(PDI - December 20, 2007)

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
Maynila, Pilipinas
BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites bidders to apply for eligibility and to bid for the hereunder project:

Name of Project/Brief Description	One (1) lot - Supply, delivery, installation, configuration, commissioning and implementation of File Server Storage Upgrade and Back-up System per BSP Terms of Reference
Approved Budget for the Contract	P3,806,192.00
Completion Period	Within sixty (60) calendar days after receipt of a copy of the approved contract

Prospective bidders should have undertaken a similar requirement awarded and completed from Y2002 to present amounting to at least fifty percent (50%) of the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC). The Eligibility Check/ Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids shall use non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. Post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid shall be conducted.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-bidding Conference(s), Evaluation of Bids, Post-qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of Republic Act No. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).

The complete schedule of activities is listed, as follows:

Activities	Schedule
1. Issuance of Bid Documents	starting 20 December 2007 (not later than 1:30 P.M.)
2. Pre-Bid Conference	11 January 2008, 9:30 A.M., Rm. MR2A
3. Opening of Bids	29 January 2008, 2:00 P.M., Rm. MR2A
4. Bid Evaluation	These shall be in accordance with the prescribed periods allowed in the Implementing Rules & Regulations (IRR-A) of R.A. No. 9184 dated 10 January 2003, as amended.
5. Post-qualification	
6. Notice of Award	

Bid documents will be available only to prospective bidders upon payment of a non-refundable amount of P1,905.00.

The BSP assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of the bid.

The BSP reserves the right to reject any or all bid proposals, or declare the bidding a failure, or not award the contract, and makes no assurance that a contract shall be entered into as a result of this invitation.

(Sgd.) **JUAN DE ZUÑIGA, JR.**
Chairman

(PDI – Dec. 20, 2007)

Republic of the Philippines
Department of Transportation and Communications
CIVIL AERONAUTICS BOARD
OLD MIA ROAD, PASAY CITY,
Metro Manila

IN RE: **PETITION FOR AUTHORITY TO IMPOSE UPWARD ADJUSTMENT OF FUEL SURCHARGE ON INTERNATIONAL PASSENGER TICKETS**

CAB Case No. EP-30216-LED1107/EK/056-PF51

EMIRATES,
Petitioner.
x---x

NOTICE OF HEARING

Pursuant to the provisions of R.A 776, as amended, notice is hereby given that **EMIRATES** has filed with the Civil Aeronautics Board a petition for authority to impose upward adjustment of fuel surcharge on international passenger tickets from USD65.00 to USD100.00 per one-way ticket. The above entitled case is scheduled for hearing on **23 January 2008** at **2:00 P.M.** at the CAB Conference Room, Old MIA Road, Pasay City, before the undersigned Hearing Officer, at which hearing the petitioner shall present evidence.

Under Section 16 of R.A. 776, the applicant is hereby required to have this Notice of Hearing published at least once, two (2) weeks before the scheduled hearing in a newspaper of general circulation and have copies hereof and the application sent to all Philippine carriers with international operation, either by personal service or by registered mail with return card at least five (5) days before the scheduled hearing.

Let a copy of this Notice be posted at the CAB Bulletin Board beginning today.

17 December 2007
Pasay City, Philippines

(Sgd.) **MA. ELBEN SL. MORO**
Hearing Officer

Copy furnished:

ATTY. CATHERINE U. LEE
Council for EMIRATES
PUNO AND PUNO LAW OFFICES
12th Floor East Tower,
Philippine Stock Exchange Centre
Exchange Road, Ortigas Center, Pasig City

ATTY. ROBERTO C.O. LIM
PAL Legal Department
Philippine Airlines, Inc.
9/F, PAL Center, Legaspi St.,
Legaspi Village, Makati City

ATTY. RAYMUNDO JAY S. GOMEZ
Counsel for Cebu Pacific
Cebu Air, Inc. Airline Operations Center APC
Domestic Airport, Pasay City

ATTY. JONATHAN ANDREW D. LIM
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MR. REYNALDO L. RODRIGUEZ
Vice President, Commercial Group
Asian Spirit, Inc.
Domestic Airport Road, Pasay City

ATTY. GEORGE ANDY B. PANTANOSAS
Counsel for PEAC
Pacific East Asia Cargo Airlines, Inc.
12th Floor, Allied Bank Center
6754 Ayala Avenue, Makati City.

(PDI–Dec. 20, 2007)

Bangko Sentral sees 'hot money,' FDI inflows doubling next year

Robust economic growth to lure investors into doing business in RP

By Michelle V. Remo

GUINIGUNDO

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG Pilipinas expects foreign direct and portfolio investments inflows to more than double next year in view of the economy's robust growth.

From this year's projected $3.1 billion in net foreign investments, the BSP said net inflows were expected to reach $6.9 billion next year.

Net foreign investments are computed by subtracting total outflows from total inflows.

BSP Deputy Governor Diwa Guinigundo told reporters that of the projected net foreign investments for next year, $3.6 billion would be in the form of foreign direct investment (FDI) infusion. The balance of $3.3 billion will come in the form of portfolio investments or "hot money."

For this year, the BSP is expecting that investment outflows would be $1.2 billion bigger than the FDI inflows. This, according to Guinigundo, can be attributed to the substantial investments made by a number of companies overseas.

Earlier, the government economic team said the higher-than-expected growth of the economy would entice investors to put up businesses in the country next year.

The economy, measured in terms of gross domestic product, grew by 7.1 percent in the first three quarters this year from year-ago level. This boosted optimism that the government's GDP growth target for this year of between 6.1 and 6.7 percent would be surpassed.

The National Economic and Development Authority has projected that the economy would grow by at least 7 percent in 2007.

Actual growth in the first three quarters, which beat most forecasts, was attributed to the increase in government spending and personal consumption. The government said it was increasing its spending on infrastructure to be at par with the spending levels in neighboring countries and to respond to complaints of businesses over poor infrastructure.

Economic managers said the government's ability to put its fiscal house in order led to the decline in interest rates which encouraged gradual growth in bank loans for investment-related activities.

The portfolio investments of $3.3 billion seen for next year, however, will be lower than the estimated $4.3 billion in hot money this year.

The projected drop in portfolio investments was due to the risk aversion by portfolio investors as a carry-over impact of the US subprime market crisis.

PLDT, 13 others sign deal on disaster recovery support

By Riza T. Olchondra

PHILIPPINE LONG DISTANCE TELEPHONE Co. and 13 other major carriers in the Asia Pacific region are pooling their resources to ensure quick restoration of services in the event of major cable system failures.

These firms, belonging to the Pacific Partners—the alliance of major carriers in the region, have signed a memorandum of agreement for the establishment of a mutual disaster recovery support.

Members of the group include AT&T of the United States, China Telecom, CAT Telecom of Thailand, Chunghwa Telecom of Taiwan, KDDI of Japan, Korea Telecom, Indosat of Indonesia, REACH of Hong Kong and Australia, Singapore Telecom, Telecom New Zealand, Telekom Malaysia, VNPT of Vietnam and VSNL International of India and Canada.

They agreed to pool their manpower, talent, facilities and other resources to deal with multiple cable failures such as what occurred after the Taiwan earthquake of December 2006.

Apart from ensuring network support, PLDT is reviving its interest in direct-to-home transmission that will complement its mobile TV offering, company chair Manuel Pangilinan said in an interview.

"We will review its feasibility early next year because everything, such as the prices of equipment and set top boxes, have gone down significantly in the past few years," Pangilinan said.

Interest rate decline boosts insurance sales

THE LOW INTEREST RATE ENVIRONMENT has perked up local investor interest in life insurance products linked to equity-based funds.

Pru Life UK, the Philippine unit of British financial giant Prudential Plc that pioneered in 'variable' or 'unit-linked' life insurance in the country, yesterday reported P1 billion worth of placements in its Prulink Equity Fund only one month after its launch.

Belle Tiongco, Pru Life UK vice president, said public interest in equity-based variable life product was phenomenal especially because investors were looking for better yielding investment products as opposed to regular savings in banks.

PruLink Equity Fund, composed of 100 percent peso equities, seeks to optimize medium- to long-term capital growth through investments in shares of stocks listed on the Philippine Stock Exchange.

"We're optimistic about the market next year. We realize our strength in the unit-linked category," Tiongco said.

A unit-linked insurance policy provides a client a life insurance cover, with the premium paid invested in either debt or equity products or a combination of the two. *Doris C. Dumlao*

From the Ivatans of Batanes to the Tawi-tawians of Tawi-tawi

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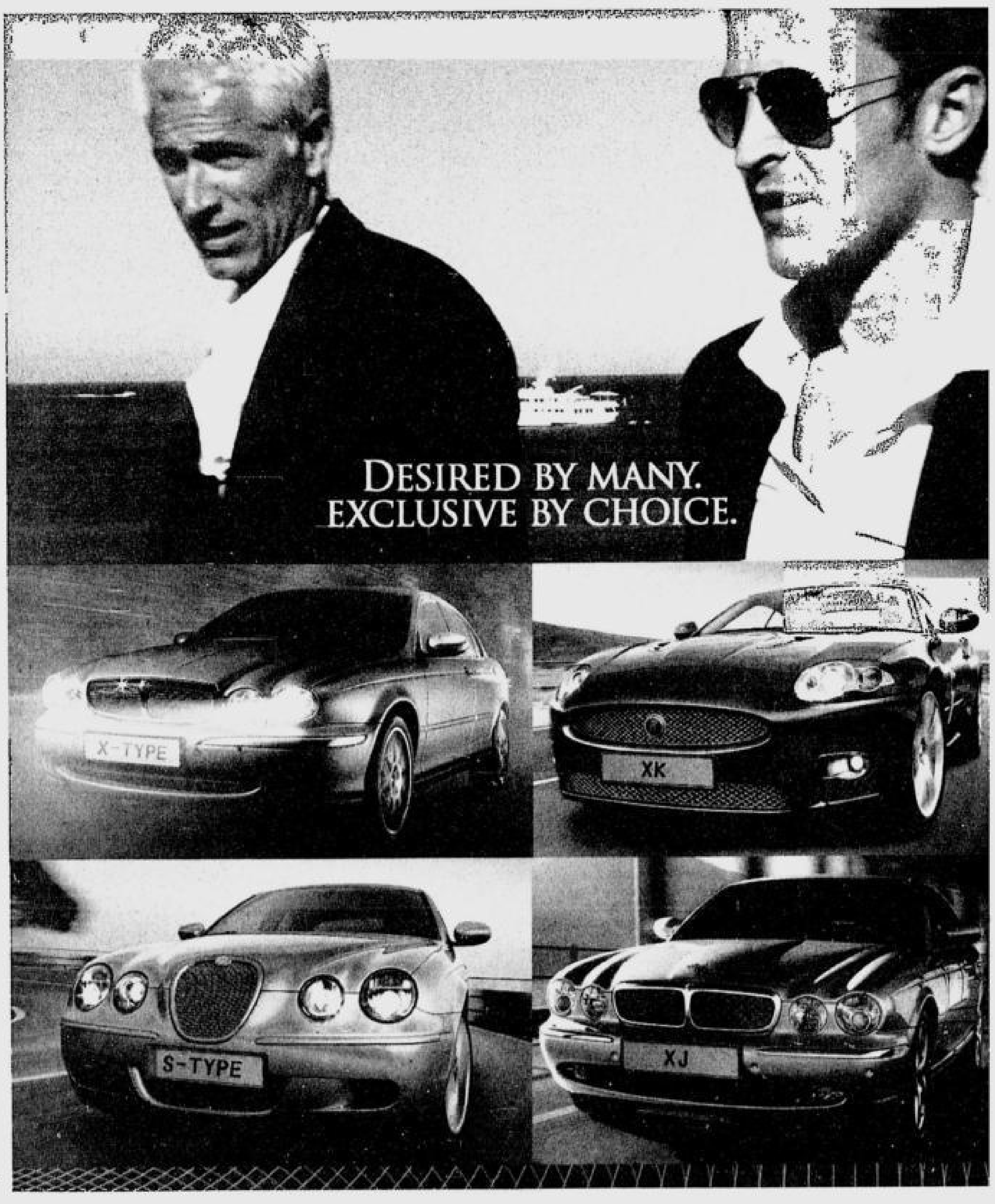

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JAGUAR

JAGUAR CARS INC. recommends PETRON BLAZE

25 units of supposedly delivered products, lacking
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5 hours of franchisee time, spent waiting for a delivery
30 minutes of heated arguments

Mix well. Serve with uncertainty and a major migraine.

Taste Biz Success with Inventory Ordering via SMS

Getting the wrong recipe in managing your inventory is a sure way to spoil your chances for business success. With so many factors to keep in mind, how can you ensure that time isn't wasted and errors are avoided?

The answer? Automation. With the latest ***SME Inventory Ordering System (IOS)*** from Globe, the leader in complete business solutions and innovations, inventory ordering and management is made easier for small and medium scale businesses.

IOS is a business solution for those engaged in retail and wholesale businesses that enables order placement through text messaging. It's easy-to-use, customizable and fully-automated. For instance, it's perfect for franchisors whose franchisees constantly need to replenish supplies. Here's how it works:

1. Your franchisee or branch manager sends his order via SMS.
2. He then receives 2 text messages, a copy of his order and another, a text asking for the confirmation of his order.
3. Upon confirming his order via a text message, the order is then automatically uploaded and processed through a user interface on your computer.

LOTS'A PIZZA™, a home-grown pizza franchise, was the first business to test and implement the system. Owner Teresita Ngan Tian is enthusiastic about the results. "It worked wonders for my business. The old system was very tedious kaya palaging matagal ang processing at recording ng orders. There were also errors in taking down orders thus resulting in wrong deliveries. Now, there's no wasted time which means no missed sales plus error-free transactions." She also adds "All I needed were SIM cards and a computer. With the new system, mabilis ang operations kasi lahat automatic. Sa IOS, sales recording has become error-free. On-time and accurate pa ang delivery ng stocks namin sa franchisees."

The system comes with other helpful features:

Inventory Management
- Product Maintenance – allows you to update the products available in the system. You can view, edit and delete the products in this section.
- Inventory Maintenance – displays inventory status including Beginning Balance, Quantity on Hand, Price, Reorder Level, and Critical Level.

Text Broadcast
- Enables you to send a text message to all your franchisees or branches.
- Includes Phonebook and Message Sending Form.

Reports Module
Shows the list of reports that can be accessed by the main office, which can be exported to Excel or PDF. These reports include:
- Franchise Applications in All Stages
- Approved Franchise Applications
- Franchise Applications Approved in Number of Days
- Order Details
- Orders for the Period
- Orders per Category
- Top Orders per Category
- Summary Report for the Month
- List of SMS Product Codes

So if you're a multi-site company or an organization with franchises, commissaries, and warehouses with backend ordering operations, just call the Globe Hotline at 730-1288 for more information.

This Christmas, there is no place like home.

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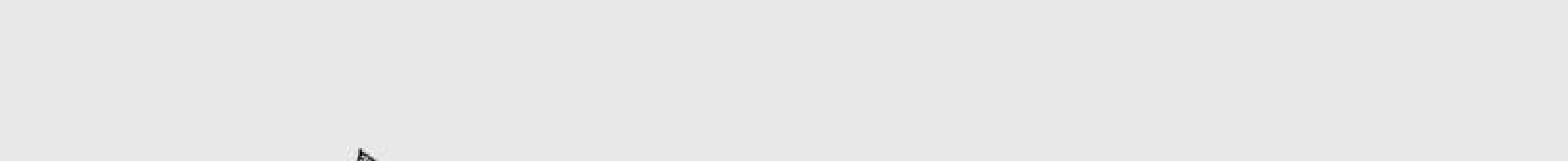
Where love and laughter fill the air, where worries and cares quickly disappear.



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SARANGANI residents receive GSK tablets to cure lymphatic filariasis.

Drug firm joins campaign vs LF

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

IN 39 OF THE 78 PROVINCES in the country, there are Filipinos silently suffering from swollen, disfigured limbs and genitals caused by lymphatic filariasis, according to the Department of Health.

They tend to isolate themselves—unable to go to school or find work—because they are ashamed of how they look like and are picked on by people ignorant of their disease. What's more, they face the risk of permanent damage to their kidneys and lymphatic system because of the filariae.

CORPORATE CITIZEN

Debilitating disease

Lymphatic filariasis, or LF, is a disabling and disfiguring parasitic disease caused by thread-like filarial worms that live and breed in the human lymphatic system. The worms stay there for four to six years, causing the blockage of vessels that leads to swollen limbs and genitals.

The worms are transmitted by mosquitoes usually found in areas with abaca and banana plantations.

LF has been identified as a major global health problem since 1907, and is considered the second leading cause of long-term disability in the Philippines, after mental disease.

But LF can be stopped in its tracks and pharmaceutical company GlaxoSmithKline is committed to help the DOH meet its goal of eliminating LF in the Philippines by 2010.

LF primarily affects the rural poor, with about four of five of those afflicted living in fourth to sixth class municipalities across the Philippines, mostly in Mindanao.

The DOH reports that some 650,000 Filipinos in Northern Luzon, Southern Tagalog, Bicol, Central Visayas, Eastern Visayas, Western Mindanao, Northern Mindanao, Southern Mindanao, Central Mindanao, Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao, Cordillera Administrative Region and Caraga are afflicted with the disease with 24 million more at risk.

Inadequate sanitation, stagnant water, crowding, lack of screens and bed nets in houses all contribute to the transmission of the disease.

Stepping up campaign

What the DOH is doing to eliminate LF is embark on a mass drug administration campaign, under which residents at least two years old in provinces where LF is present must take two drugs once a year for four to six straight years.

The goal is to cover at least 85 percent of residents in affected provinces for four to six years. Any less than that and the medicine and the campaign to eradicate the disease will be useless.

Sounds simple in theory, but it is infinitely more difficult in practice, explained Vicente Y. Belizario Jr., member of the faculty of the University of the Philippines in Manila and vice chair of the Coalition for the Elimination of Lymphatic Filariasis (CELF) in the Philippines, which is helping the DOH halt the spread of LF.

Belizario said getting people to take the drugs for four to six years was the most challenging part of the campaign that started in 2001.

Because it takes years before the disease manifests itself after a person contracts the parasitic disease, he said residents of affected areas could not see the need to undergo treatment.

And even those who do take the drugs usually fall out after one or two years, rendering the campaign ineffective. As a result, the infection will continue to be passed on from one resident to another.

"If the residents of areas where LF is present do not take the drugs for four to six years, then the campaign will be useless. There will be no end to it," he said.

Creating awareness

But with the participation of GlaxoSmithKline in the coalition and its commitment to provide for free one of the two drugs needed to cure LF, the goal to rid the country of the debilitating disease by 2010 no longer seems too farfetched.

GSK is committed to not just provide the drug but also take part in the massive information campaign to get the residents of the 39 provinces to take the drugs to cure LF and also to convince the local government units to be part of the effort to eradicate LF in the Philippines.

GSK has already turned over 15.1 million albendazole tablets to the LF group, benefiting at least 2.9 million Filipinos, and it has committed to continue providing the drug until 2010, or until LF is officially declared eliminated.

The pharmaceutical company is optimistic that with the participation of other organizations in the vital campaign, the Philippines will win the battle against the spread of LF.

State firms remit ₱32.5B to gov't

Bangko Sentral, PNOC biggest contributors of dividends

By Michelle V. Remo

STATE-OWNED FIRMS REMITTED P32.49 billion in dividends and guarantee-fee payments to the national government in the first 11 months of the year.

The amount was 78 percent higher than the P18.21 billion contributed by state firms to the national coffers in the same period last year.

Finance Undersecretary Jeremias Paul Jr., who is in charge of monitoring the financial performance of state-owned firms, said the increase was attributed to the intensified collection of dividends and fees from government-owned and -controlled corporations (GOCCs) and government financial institutions (GFIs).

The biggest dividend contributions came from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, P2.5 billion; Philippine National Oil Co., P2.2 billion; Philippine Ports Authority, P1.37 billion, and Land Bank of the Philippines, P1 billion.

The charters of most state-owned firms require them to remit at least 50 percent of their income to the national government as dividends.

Paul said the Department of Finance had stepped up efforts to collect dividends from state-owned firms as a way to instill financial discipline in them. GOCCs and GFIs were asked to help the national government achieve its goal of hitting zero budget deficit in 2008.

Paul said that based on the 2007 fiscal program, the government already exceeded its full-year dividends collection target. He said the government set the target for the year at only P4 billion.

In the previous years, Paul said many GOCCs were not remitting dividends to the national government. These firms only started remitting dividends when the government started adopting a tougher stance on this.

To boost efforts to instill financial discipline among state-owned firms, Paul said, the government will come up with "performance contracts" for GOCCs and GFIs. He said the first batch of contracts would be out before the end of the year.

A performance contract, whose contents will vary from one organization to another, will indicate a state-owned firm's objectives, especially income targets and those involving service delivery.

The amount collected from GOCCs and GFIs, along with the earnings generated from the privatization of state assets, helped boost the government's revenue for this year.

In January to November, the government raised P90 billion from the privatization program.

Among the major state-owned assets sold were the government's 80-percent stake in PNOC-Energy Development Corp., 46-percent stake in Philippine Telecommunications Investment Corp., the old Ilo-Ilo property and minority stake in Philippine National Bank.

With the privatization proceeds and the dividends contributions, the government was able to post P12.6 billion in budget surplus in the first 11 months of the year.

This gave the government a chance to post a balanced budget this year, or one year ahead of the target.

The government originally set a budget deficit ceiling of P63 billion this year.

Food traders report higher sales to M. East

By Ronnel W. Domingo

LOCAL FOOD EXPORTERS, MOSTLY SMALL and medium-scale, earned some P140 million or $3.34 million from this year's Middle East roadshow, growing by 20 percent from year-ago level.

According to the Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions, which organized the roadshow, five firms took part in the sortie that covered three of the seven-member countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council in the Middle East and which targeted the more established markets of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and United Arab Emirates.

These companies included KSK Food (cornicks, chips and cookies); Fisher Farms (processed milkfish); Florence Foods Corp. (bottled preserves, processed marine products, noodles, frozen fruits and vegetables, coconut products); D' Fortune Philippines (canned and bottled foodstuffs); Q-Phil Products International (noodles, bottled sweet preserves); and RFM Corp. (rice-based mixes, hotcake mixes, pancit noodles, flavored drinks, ice cream, processed meat).

Dubbed IFEX Roadshow to the Middle East, the mission also resulted in 101 trade inquiries from various buyers across the region.

Citem said representatives of the firms were also able to talk with authorities from food-governing bodies in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the UAE on relevant rules that would ensure penetration of the largest markets in the Middle East.

Citem said food exporters that wanted to tap the Middle Eastern markets should familiarize themselves with industry regulations, particularly on matters related to labeling, packaging and inclusion of Arabic translation.

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Oriental Peninsula stocks up 19% on listing debut

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

ORIENTAL PENINSULA RESOURCES Group Inc., the first mining firm to go public after 24 years, yesterday closed 19 percent higher on its maiden trading day to P3.20.

Oriental Peninsula opened strong at P3.15, compared with its offer price of P2.68 a share.

"Investors who were earlier wary about the company during its IPO (initial public offer period last week) due to a string of legal cases started picking it up today. At 7 times 2008 earnings, it is relatively cheap compared to other IPOs that were doing 13 to 15 times 2008 earnings," said Joseph Roxas, president at Eagle Equities Inc.

"I guess it was the potential of good mining projects coupled with its relatively small and manageable issue size that ensured a successful debut," added Francisco Liboro, president at PCCI Securities.

Oriental Peninsula president and chief executive Caroline Tanchay said yesterday that pending court cases involving the company's mining claims in Palawan would not deter the company from pushing through with operating its nickel mine by the first half of 2008.

Legal cases fail to dampen investor interest

"We have all the permits to push through (with the operation of the nickel tenement in Palawan)," she said.

In a disclosure to the stock exchange, Oriental Peninsula said Branch 56 of the Makati Regional Trial Court had denied an application for a temporary restraining order filed by Platinum Group Metals Corp. chair Ramon Atayde that would have stopped the Philippine Stock Exchange from allowing Oriental to conduct its public offer last week and listing yesterday.

Oriental Peninsula also won a case at the Makati RTC Branch 148, which granted it a 17-day temporary restraining order stopping Platinum Group from causing the publication of paid advertisement that would illegally obstruct the IPO of Oriental Peninsula.

However, Branch 48 of the Palawan Regional Trial Court slapped a 72-hour temporary restraining order dated Dec. 18 against Oriental Peninsula and its subsidiary, Citinickel Mines and Development Corp., to stop quarrying operations in Sofronio Espanola, Palawan, and to cease from constructing a mining road within and outside the area.

The complaint was filed by a certain Mark Benedicto Concepcion, but details of the complaint were not available as of press time.

Tanchay said Oriental Peninsula may partner with a foreign firm to put up a smelting plant in Palawan to produce pure nickel in three years time.

The company or its foreign partner may need to spend roughly $300 million for the smelting plant project. Foreign groups from India, China and Australia have expressed interest in partnering with Oriental for the venture.

Pure nickel sells in the international market for $26,000 to $28,000 a ton compared with nickel ore at $35 to $100 a ton.

Ayala Land joins...

From page B1

how that arrangement was finally set in the contract," the source said.

The JHMC official sought anonymity because he was not authorized by the BCDA to discuss the new John Hay contracts. But he said the new deals would still need city government endorsement.

BCDA chair Narciso Abaya announced last week that BCDA would sign a new payment scheme with CJHDevco by year's end.

Both CJHDevco and BCDA had gone to court to settle a dispute involving the firm's outstanding rent, after Fil Estate chair Robert John Sobrepeña suspended payments in retaliation for a Supreme Court ruling that invalidated the tax incentives enjoyed by Camp John Hay businesses.

Lito Pangilinan, JHMC board director, said the dispute had already been addressed when President Macapagal-Arroyo signed RA 9300, which amended the BCDA law (RA 7227) by restoring John Hay's fiscal incentives.

This development also eased the tension between BCDA and the Baguio government because it had mortgaged its only convention center against John Hay proceeds.

Mayor Reinaldo Bautista Jr. said he had demanded that CJHDevco remit portions of its future rent to the Baguio treasury.

Pangilinan said JHMC also assured the city government that it would continue to receive a 25-percent share from John Hay's rent proceeds, as prescribed by 19 conditions which the city government set as a prerequisite before it endorsed John Hay's privatization in 1994.

PSALM postpones ...

From page B1

to assess whether or not it could commit a specific bidding schedule to the prequalified bidders or just suspend the auction indefinitely.

"We probably will have to reschedule by early next year. What's critical is the steam sale agreement. Since we don't have that yet, we really have to discuss whether or not we can already put a specific schedule to it. We're looking at all our options," he explained.

He said the existing GRSC that PNOC-EDC last year submitted to the JCPC would have to be amended to adapt to an environment that had a commercially operating wholesale electricity spot market (WESM).

Instead of a supply agreement that had no take-or-pay provision, he said there had to be a certain level of steam covered by a take-or-pay provision, so that the new owner of the Palinpinon plant would be assured of steady steam supply.

With a take-or-pay provision, the future owner of the Palinpinon plant would have to pay for a specific level of steam whether or not it is used to fuel the facility.

The steamfield operator, on the other hand, would have to provide the contracted level of steam to the plant owner.

"We won't adopt the original (steam sale agreement) since that was crafted for a non-WESM environment. The contracted steam level for that SSA was 75 percent. For the GRSC now, we're looking at a take-or-pay level of around 50-60 percent," he said.

The plant package was supposed to be auctioned off last Dec. 5, but PSALM decided to move the bid submission deadline to Dec. 19 as it still had to revise the transaction documents for the asset package.

The Dec. 19 bidding did not push through because of the absence of a GRSC.

SM Prime eyes ₱4B in loans in 2008

SM PRIME HOLDINGS INC., the mall development arm of tycoon Henry Sy Sr., is looking at borrowing roughly P4 billion next year to partly fund the construction of new malls.

SM Prime executive vice president Jeffrey Lim said SM Prime was looking at possible peso borrowings to finance its P6-billion capital expenditure program next year.

SM Prime is spending P6 billion for new malls and the expansion of existing malls in 2008. The new malls will be located in Rosales, Pangasinan (25,000 sq. m.), Baliuag, Bulacan (48,000 sq. m.) and Marikina (130,000 sq.m.). SM Megamall in Pasig City will be expanded as well as SM Fairview in Quezon City.

SM Prime said it will have a total of 33 malls by 2008.

SM Investments Corp. (SMIC), SM Prime's parent firm, meantime said it was also studying possible borrowings to partly fund its P25-billion capital expenditure program next year, SMIC executive vice president Jose Sio said.

Sio said that about 40 percent of the total capital spending next year may be funded possibly through debt. Bulk of the budget for 2008 will go to property, tourism and mall development. *Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson*

Privatization seen to yield ...

From page B1

next year, just a third of the P90 billion generated this year from the sale of state-owned assets.

The P30 billion will cover the expected revenues from the sale of the Food Terminals Inc.'s property in Taguig, the government's 12-percent stake in Manila Electric Co., and real estate in Fujimi, Japan.

San Miguel Corp. (SMC), which used to be a priority in the privatization program, is not part of the targeted assets to be sold next year. Earlier estimates said the government could generate P50 billion from the sale of its 24-percent stake in the food and beverage giant.

Sale of big-ticket government assets was the saving grace for the government's fiscal condition this year following shortfalls in tax collection. Despite the under-performance of the Bureau of Internal Revenue in meeting its monthly collection goals, the government managed to post a P12.6-billion surplus in the first 11 months of 2007.

The government registered a record P54-billion surplus for the month of November when it sold its remaining 60-percent stake in PNOC-Energy Development Corp., considered the biggest privatization deal so far as it yielded P58.5 billion in revenues.

Economists have said that the healthy fiscal position was artificial because it depended heavily on privatization. They said a budget surplus resulting from privatization was not sustainable because it depended on the availability of assets to be sold. Efficient tax collection is the preferred way of raising revenues.

CURRENCIES

December 19, 2007 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.693626	1.000000	41.9990
Japan	Yen	0.006118	0.008821	0.3705
United Kingdom	Pound	1.397309	2.014500	84.6070
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.088912	0.128184	5.3836
Switzerland	Franc	0.602158	0.868131	36.4606
Canada	Dollar	0.690037	0.994827	41.7817
Singapore	Dollar	0.475542	0.685589	28.7941
Australia	Dollar	0.594112	0.856531	35.9734
Bahrain	Dinar*	1.847205	2.663116	111.8482
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.184760	0.266368	11.1872
Brunei	Dollar	0.473918	0.683247	28.6957
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000074	0.000106	0.0045
Thailand	Baht	0.022930	0.033058	1.3884
UAE	Dirham	0.188885	0.272316	11.4370
EU	Euro	1.000000	1.441700	60.5500
Korea	Won	0.000739	0.001065	0.0447
China	Yuan**	0.093921	0.135406	5.6869
Denmark	Kroner	0.134016	0.193211	8.1147
India	Rupee	0.017569	0.025329	1.0638
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.207022	0.298463	12.5351
New Zealand	Dollar	0.521798	0.752276	31.5948
Sweden	Kroner	0.105806	0.152541	6.4066
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.021342	0.030769	1.2923

Source: Reuters' forex closing prices as of NY time—Dec. 18, 2007
* Various banks in Bahrain as quoted in Reuters' Screen.
** Asian time closing rate as of Dec. 18, 2007

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of December 19, 2007)

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
		BANKS					
17.5	6.8	Asiatrust Development Bank Inc.	8.3	8.3	8.3	8.3	13,000
73	44	Banco de Oro-EPCI Inc.	58.5	58.5	56.5	58	11,054,500
73.5	53	Bank of the Philippine Islands	58.5	59	57	57.5	3,953,500
748	544	China Banking Corp.	650	650	650	650	960
40	16.52	Chinatrust Comm'l Banking Corp.	36	36	36	36	400
23.5	14	Citystate Savings Bank	23	23.25	23	23.25	1,600
0.63	0.36	Export and Industry Bank Inc.	0.38	0.38	0.38	0.38	180,000
75.5	47.5	Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co.	53.5	54.5	53	53	2,830,400
65.5	39	Philippine National Bank	47	47	46.5	46.5	71,600
68	47	Philippine Savings Bank	59.5	60	58.5	58.5	7,200
39.57	20.43	Rizal Commercial Banking Corp.	23.75	23.75	23.5	23.75	63,200
90	65	Security Bank Corp.	75.5	76	75.5	76	153,800
66	42	Union Bank of the Philippines	43.5	43.5	43.5	43.5	2,100
		OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
5.6	1.92	ATR KimEng Financial Corp.	4	4	4	4	40,000
2.22	0.6	Bankard Inc.	1.86	1.92	1.86	1.9	320,000
16.25	4.6	CitisecOnline.com Inc.	10.75	11	10.5	10.75	147,300
8.8	4.7	Filipino Fund Inc.	7.8	7.8	7.8	7.8	1,000
1.6	0.55	First Abacus Financial Holdings Corp.	1	1	1	1	10,000
42.5	29	First Metro Investment Corp.	41	42.5	41	42.5	2,000
5.9	4.6	I-Remit Inc.	4.7	4.7	4.6	4.65	79,000
6.8	1.74	Makati Finance Corp.	4	4	4	4	25,000
5	2.7	National Reinsurance Corp. of the Phils.	3.15	3.15	3.1	3.15	1,157,000
3.1	1.32	PCI Leasing and Finance Inc.	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	80,000
1,390.00	270	The Philippine Stock Exchange Inc.	1,015.00	1,015.00	1,015.00	1,015.00	5,270
2,500.00	1,970.00	Sun Life Financial Inc.	2,270.00	2,270.00	2,270.00	2,270.00	50
1.94	1.3	iVantage Corp	1.68	1.68	1.66	1.66	797,000
		ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
6.2	3.8	Aboitiz Power Corp.	5	5.1	5	5	193,000
0.57	0.22	East Asia Power Resources Corp.	0.38	0.41	0.38	0.41	100,000
70.5	49	First Gen Corp.	60	60.5	59.5	60.5	181,100
92	58	First Phil. Holdings Corp.	70	71.5	70	71	326,000
18.75	8.8	Manila Water Co. Inc.	18.5	18.75	18.25	18.5	10,863,300
105.45	48.64	Manila Electric Co.	80	80.5	79	79.5	967,800
7.8	4.3	PNOC Energy Development Corp.	6.7	6.7	6.6	6.7	16,548,000
7.4	3.95	Petron Corp.	5.8	5.8	5.6	5.7	2,438,000
14.75	6.4	Phoenix Petroleum Philippines Inc.	6.8	7	6.8	7	68,000
2.04	0.94	Trans-Asia Oil & Energy Dev't Corp.	1.22	1.24	1.22	1.22	1,641,000
		FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
6.3	3.4	Alaska Milk Corp.	4.95	5.1	4.95	5.1	121,000
2.32	1.46	Alliance Tuna International Inc.	1.54	1.54	1.5	1.5	207,000
61	40.5	Jollibee Foods Corp.	48	49	48	48.5	263,100
9.1	6	Pancake House Inc.	9	9	9	9	200,000
0.98	0.5	RFM Corp.	0.68	0.68	0.67	0.67	440,000
3.1	2.06	Roxas Holdings	2.85	2.85	2.85	2.85	112,000
80	42.5	San Miguel Corp. "A"	59	59.5	59	59.5	138,100
88	43	San Miguel Corp. "B"	59.5	59.5	59	59.5	1,034,100
0.66	0.33	Swift Foods Inc.	0.44	0.44	0.44	0.44	60,000
20.75	13.5	Universal Robina Corp.	13.75	13.75	13.5	13.5	4,334,700
0.55	0.24	Vitarich Corp.	0.39	0.39	0.39	0.39	60,000
		CONSTRUCTION INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
6.1	2.65	EEI Corp	4	4	4	4	15,000
9.2	4.95	Holcim Philippines Inc.	7.9	7.9	7.9	7.9	71,000
2	0.81	Southeast Asia Cement Holdings Inc.	0.96	0.98	0.96	0.98	290,000
23	2.12	TKC Steel Corp.	9.1	9.1	8.8	9.1	508,000
		CHEMICALS					
6.3	3.75	Chemrez Technologies Inc.	4	4.1	4	4.05	120,000
2.4	1.31	Euro-Med Laboratories Phil. Inc.	2	2	2	2	5,000
		DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
0.75	0.185	Picop Resources Inc.	0.35	0.35	0.33	0.34	1,010,000
9	6.2	Splash Corp.	8.4	8.4	8	8.3	2,355,000
		HOLDING FIRMS					
39	18.75	ABS-CBN Holdings Corp. - PDR	34	34	34	34	22,000
3.9	2.7	A. Soriano Corp.	3.35	3.4	3.35	3.35	71,000
0.185	0.0575	AJO.net Holdings Inc.	0.115	0.12	0.11	0.115	35,570,000
1.28	0.3	APC Group Inc.	0.58	0.61	0.58	0.59	9,890,000
3.65	1.5	ATN Holdings Inc. "A"	2.32	2.5	2.32	2.5	80,000
0.0182	0.0076	Abacus Cons. Res. & Hold'gs Inc. "A"	0.01	0.01	0.0095	0.01	31,000,000
9.7	5.8	Aboitiz Equity Ventures Inc.	6.8	6.8	6.8	6.8	4,350,000
0.021	0.01	Alcorn Gold Resources Corp.	0.014	0.014	0.014	0.014	5,100,000
7.3	3.5	Alliance Global Group Inc.	5.2	5.3	5.1	5.2	1,772,000
1.38	0.61	Alsons Consolidated Resources Inc.	0.76	0.76	0.75	0.75	110,000
2.9	1.04	Anglo-Philippine Holdings Corp.	2.32	2.36	2.3	2.34	761,000
8	0.8	Aries Prime Resources Inc.	3.1	3.1	3	3	43,000
645	400	Ayala Corp.	510	510	492.5	495	396,070
5.8	2.14	Benpres Holdings Corp.	4.1	4.3	4.1	4.2	5,585,000
12	5.6	DMCI Holdings Inc.	9.2	9.3	9.2	9.3	261,000
3.55	1.76	House of Investments Inc.	2	2	2	2	20,000
14.5	8.9	JG Summit Holdings Inc.	9.9	9.9	9.9	9.9	156,000
28	1.42	Lodestar Investment Hldgs Corp.	16	16	15.75	16	3,000
0.95	0.32	Mabuhay Holdings Corp.	0.46	0.46	0.44	0.45	280,000
11.5	1.5	Minerales Industrias Corp.	6.4	6.5	6.1	6.2	1,302,000
8.5	3.1	PAL Holdings Inc.	6.1	6.1	6	6	22,000
0.28	0.016	Pacifica Inc. "A"	0.22	0.22	0.205	0.205	108,380,000
2.1	1.3	Republic Glass Holdings Corp.	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	208,000
452.5	287.71	SM Investments Corp.	337.5	337.5	335	335	98,670
0.73	0.15	Sinophil Corp.	0.34	0.34	0.33	0.33	3,320,000
0.75	0.12	Wellex Industries Inc.	0.28	0.3	0.28	0.29	730,000
		PROPERTY					
2.38	1	A Brown Co. Inc.	1.98	2.04	1.94	1.96	3,184,000
19.25	12.08	Ayala Land Inc.	14.5	14.75	14	14	12,629,300
1.88	1	Belle Corp.	1.22	1.22	1.22	1.22	880,000
0.83	0.24	Cyber Bay Corp.	0.36	0.37	0.36	0.37	1,410,000
1.05	0.56	Empire East Land Holdings Inc.	0.8	0.8	0.79	0.79	5,430,000
6.9	1.1	Eton Properties Philippines Inc.	3.85	3.85	3.85	3.85	130,000
1.48	0.61	Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.95	0.96	0.94	0.95	9,170,000
2.44	1.22	Filinvest Land Inc.	1.32	1.34	1.3	1.3	91,119,000
1.12	0.31	MRC Allied Industries Inc.	0.53	0.53	0.53	0.53	200,000
4.6	2.24	Megaworld Corp.	3.85	3.85	3.7	3.75	38,892,000
6.4	2.24	Metro Pacific Investments Corp.	4.05	4.15	4	4.15	101,000
0.7	0.15	Phil. Estates Corp.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	300,000
0.86	0.32	Philippine Realty & Holdings Corp.	0.49	0.49	0.46	0.49	730,000
9.2	1.7	Polar Property Holdings Corp.	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.25	15,000
23	14.5	Robinson Land Corp.	15.75	16	15.5	16	825,100
5.9	2.05	SM Development Corp.	3.8	3.85	3.8	3.8	339,000
13.5	8	SM Prime Holdings Inc.	10.5	10.5	10	10	12,778,700
3.25	1.5	Shang Properties Inc.	2.22	2.24	2.16	2.16	2,262,000
4.5	0.38	Sta. Lucia Land Inc.	1.78	1.82	1.76	1.76	111,000
1.34	0.46	Suntrust Home Developers Inc.	0.61	0.62	0.61	0.61	120,000
0.49	0.0975	Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.22	0.23	0.22	0.23	1,610,000
7.5	3.65	Vista Land and Lifescapes Inc.	5.8	5.8	5.6	5.7	1,320,000
		MEDIA					
38.5	18.75	ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	32.5	32.5	32	32.5	35,300
12	7.6	GMA Holdings Inc.	8	8.4	8	8.1	4,267,000
11.75	7.5	GMA Network Inc.	7.8	7.9	7.8	7.8	58,000
		TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
2.12	1.1	Digital Telecommunications Phils. Inc.	1.56	1.58	1.52	1.56	5,011,000
1,750.00	1,180.00	Globe Telecom Inc.	1,480.00	1,490.00	1,480.00	1,485.00	56,030
3,285.00	2,250.00	Phil. Long Distance Telephone Co.	3,000.00	3,000.00	2,975.00	3,000.00	76,710
8.1	5.5	Pilipino Telephone Corp.	6.9	7	6.9	7	160,000
		INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
0.39	0.17	Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.19	0.19	0.19	0.19	6,000,000
16.5	2.1	Diversified Financial Network Inc.	15.25	16.5	15	15	3,137,500
11.5	3.55	IPVG Corp.	7.3	7.4	7.2	7.4	206,000
0.065	0.027	ISM Communications Corp.	0.037	0.037	0.036	0.036	13,000,000
5	1.62	Information Capital Tech. Ventures Inc.	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	210,000
2.9	1.1	Ionics Inc.	1.5	1.5	1.46	1.46	183,000
0.32	0.05	Island Information & Technology Inc.	0.17	0.175	0.165	0.17	4,360,000
2.26	1.1	Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.98	1.98	1.86	1.88	2,910,000
0.0725	0.03	Philweb Corp.	0.045	0.046	0.045	0.046	14,600,000
4.9	1.64	Transpacific Broadband Group Int'l. Inc.	2.34	2.38	2.32	2.32	1,107,000
		TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
2.14	1.18	Aboitiz Transport System Corp.	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1,157,000
6.8	3.6	Asian Terminals Inc.	3.85	4	3.85	4	15,141,000
49	19	Int'l Container Terminal Services Inc.	44	44	43.5	44	506,500
2.3	0.93	Keppel Philippines Marine Inc.	2.1	2.2	2.1	2.2	2,033,000
		HOTEL & LEISURE					
4.25	1.8	Leisure and Resorts World Corp.	2.42	2.42	2.4	2.4	200,000
1.52	0.33	Premiere Entertainment Prod. Inc.	1.24	1.26	1.18	1.18	3,447,000
1.2	0.55	Waterfront Philippines Inc.	0.8	0.8	0.78	0.8	880,000
		EDUCATION					
3.7	2.6	iPeople Inc.	3.2	3.2	3.15	3.15	21,000
		DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
43	6.6	JTH Davies Holdings Inc.	29	29	26.5	26.5	45,200
6	2.04	Macroasia Corp.	4.6	4.7	4.6	4.65	321,000
17.25	9.8	Pacific Online Systems Corp.	11	11	10.25	10.25	306,000
30	5.3	Paxys Inc.	5.4	6.4	5.4	5.9	4,784,000
		MINING					
0.017	0.0085	Abra Mining and Industrial Corp.	0.0095	0.01	0.0095	0.0095	38,000,000
7.2	3.6	Apex Mining Co. Inc. "A"	5.9	5.9	5.9	5.9	285,000
7.4	3.85	Apex Mining Co. Inc. "B"	6.3	6.3	6.2	6.2	70,000
21.25	8.1	Atlas Cons. Mining and Dev't Corp.	13.25	13.5	13	13.5	258,400
20.75	8.9	Benguet Corp. "A"	19	19.75	18.75	19	383,300
12.75	2.1	Dizon Copper Silver Mines Inc.	8.9	9	8.6	8.7	317,000
3.1	0.6	Geograce Resources Philippines Inc.	1.88	1.9	1.78	1.8	34,198,000
0.56	0.18	Lepanto Consolidated Mining Co. "A"	0.48	0.48	0.47	0.47	9,260,000
0.61	0.22	Lepanto Consolidated Mining Co. "B"	0.5	0.5	0.48	0.49	7,120,000
0.038	0.017	Manila Mining Corp. "A"	0.028	0.028	0.027	0.028	10,300,000
0.041	0.02	Manila Mining Corp. "B"	0.029	0.029	0.029	0.029	2,000,000
30	3.6	NiHAO Minerals Resources Int'l Inc.	19.5	19.5	18.5	19	267,900
0.021	0.0096	Omico Corp.	0.013	0.014	0.013	0.013	74,100,000
0.015	0.007	Omico Corp. - Warrants	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	20,000,000
3.3	3	Oriental Peninsula Resources Inc.	3.15	3.3	3	3.2	67,466,000
11.25	3.5	Philex Mining Corp.	9.5	9.5	9.3	9.5	4,563,000
1.36	0.65	United Paragon Mining Corp.	0.72	0.72	0.72	0.72	490,000
1.8	0.99	Vulcan Industrial and Mining Corp.	1.06	1.06	1.06	1.06	615,000
		OIL					
0.58	0.27	Basic Energy Corp.	0.3	0.3	0.29	0.3	1,780,000
0.029	0.011	Oriental Pet. & Minerals Corp. "A"	0.023	0.023	0.023	0.023	151,300,000
0.03	0.011	Oriental Pet. & Minerals Corp. "B"	0.025	0.025	0.025	0.025	23,300,000
13.75	9	Petroenergy Resources Corp.	9.9	9.9	9.9	9.9	95,000
0.032	0.0098	The Philodrill Corp.	0.028	0.028	0.028	0.028	103,000,000

	AVERAGES		VOLUME	VALUE
Financial	839.27 UP	2.49	20,970,880	1,050,503,705.00
Industrial	4,394.27 UP	31.38	44,670,200	610,249,360.00
Holding Firms	1,873.92 DOWN	6.60	209,508,740	341,032,895.00
Property	1,447.78 DOWN	20.81	183,556,100	628,290,485.00
Service	1,804.16 UP	3.50	79,742,240	510,600,665.00
Mining & Oil	8,094.67 DOWN	57.33	529,168,600	357,955,905.00
All Shares Index	2,136.80 UP	0.62		
PSEI	3,466.28 DOWN	3.93		
		GRAND TOTALS	1,067,616,760	3,498,633,015.00

COMPILED BY SCHATZI QUODALA, INQUIRER RESEARCH

SOURCE: TECHNISTOCK, PSE

SSS net income surged to ₱16.17B as of Sept.

Revenues up to P65.5B from P48.4B in 2006

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE STATE-OWNED SOCIAL SECURITY System chalked up a net income of P16.17 billion as of September this year, dwarfing the P6.85 billion it recorded in the same period last year.

SSS president Corazon dela Paz-Bernardo said in a briefing that total revenues for the first nine months amounted to P65.5 billion versus P48.4 billion as of September last year.

"These [figures] reflect our successful efforts to maintain the financial viability of the fund so that the SSS can continue disbursing benefits to our 27 million members," Dela Paz-Bernardo said.

The surge was attributed to the income from government securities and equities, investment property, stock dividends and loan interests.

Dela Paz-Bernanrdo also cited better stock market conditions and the P7.11 billion that the SSS generated from the sale of its holdings in food and beverage giant San Miguel Corp.

Contribution collection against benefit payments yielded a surplus of P1.32 billion in the first nine months, while reserve funds swelled by P19.51 billion over a year ago to hit P244.51 billion.

As such, the fund's actuarial life was stretched out to 2036 because contribution collection has been exceeding benefit payments since 2005.

SSS' reserve funds has been rising since 2003, partly buoyed by the vibrant stock market.

"This is a significant improvement since in the 1999 actuarial valuation, the Social Security Fund was projected to last only until 2015," she said.

Retirement and death benefits make up 83 percent of the P44.6 billion that the SSS disbursed to members in the first nine months, up 22 percent over the disbursements a year ago.

Payments for retirement benefits increased by 23 percent to P21.09 billion, due to two 10 percent across-the-board pension hikes implemented last August and in September last year, she said.

Banco de Oro expects profit of P7B in 2007

By Michelle V. Remo

BANCO DE ORO UNIVERSAL BANK, THE country's second largest bank, expects its net income this year to hit P7 billion, up 16 percent from last year's P6 billion.

BDO president Nestor Tan said in a briefing yesterday that the growth would be due partly to the surge in transactions in the run-up to the holidays.

"The Christmas season is usually the strong season for banks. There are more loans and consumers pick up more activity," Tan said.

BDO, owned by tycoon Henry Sy, is the surviving entity of its merger with Equitable-PCI Bank. The merger was completed early this year.

Earlier, BDO reported a net income of P4.9 billion in the first nine months, a 4.2-percent increase from P4.7 billion recorded in the same period last year.

Tan said the outlook next year was positive and that the bank expects net income to grow even more.

Next year's income will be driven by lending, investment services and participation in the capital market.

The bank's positive outlook for next year was partly anchored on the expected increase in investments next year resulting from this year's robust economic growth.

The economy grew 7.1 percent in the first three quarters of the year from a year ago, keeping it on track to surpass the official target of 6.1 and 6.7 percent for the full year.

Consistent with the better-than-expected economic growth this year, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas projected that foreign direct investments next year would rise by 122 percent to $3.6 billion.

Prior to the merger, BDO was the country's fifth largest bank while Equitable-PCI was the third largest.

This made the merger quite unusual as it is the larger bank that usually acquires the smaller one.

The merger realized the goal of Henry Sy's SM Group of Companies to be one of the leading players in the banking industry.

BDO, now considered the most aggressive in terms of engaging in mergers and acquisitions, has acquired several other smaller banks prior to its deal with Equitable-PCI Bank.

Seaweed exports seen declining

By Amy R. Remo

THE LOCAL SEAWEED INDUSTRY EXPECTS to lose more than P2 billion in exports due largely to the rapid appreciation of peso, according to an industry leader.

Benson U. Dakay, president of the Seaweed Industry Association of the Philippines, said that even if exports reach $180 million, up from last year's $165 million, the peso equivalent this year would be much less compared to last year.

In an interview, Dakay explained that at P55-P56 to a dollar, last year's exports reached more than P9 billion, while this year, at 40-41 to a dollar, sales are likely to only reach some P7 billion.

"Less money in the seaweed factories means less money for our farmers. As it is, the shutdowns and slowdowns of factories have displaced about 100,000 farmers and workers," said Dakay, who is also chief executive officer of Cebu-based Shemberg Marketing Corp.

The Philippines is the top exporter of carrageenan to the United States and Europe, and accounts for 70 percent of the global supply.

Carrageenan is used worldwide as food additive for ham processing and dairy product manufacturing and as an industrial product ingredient for pharmaceutical soft gel medicine coating and for hygiene products' base for toothpaste, he noted.

According to Dakay, firms including King Agro, Dahon Dagat, Geltech Hayco, Philippine Carrageenan and Natum and small scale seaweed businesses have already stopped operations.

"The government should make the peso more stable because the appreciation this year is very abrupt, from P54 down to P41 to a dollar," he said.

He noted that he even had to change payment schemes to arrest foreign exchange losses.

To stop the further decline in the exports of seaweed and carrageenan, Dakay added that the government should give farmers assistance in the form of working capital and seedlings.

Dakay earlier urged the government to exempt seaweed farmers and traders from the 1-percent withholding tax on agricultural suppliers.

Other factors such as global warming and stiffer competition had also taken their toll on the industry, which is reeling from the insufficient supply of seaweeds as farms in Tawi-Tawi and Sulu have not fully recovered from last year's typhoons.

Last year, seaweed production declined by 8 percent to 95,000 metric tons from 102,820 metric tons in 2004 as warmer water temperatures have made it more difficult to produce seaweed.

BCDA

INVITATION FOR PROPOSALS

Republic of the Philippines

DAMPE SERVICE AREA OF THE SUBIC-CLARK-TARLAC EXPRESSWAY

The Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA) is inviting interested oil companies to participate in the bidding for the privatization and development of the 2-hectare portion of the Dampe Service Area of the Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway (Sta. 21+730 Subic-bound).

Interested oil companies should submit their Letters of Interest to BCDA and must purchase the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the disposition that outlines, among others, the requirements that will enable the oil companies to participate in the bidding for the privatization.

The TOR for the disposition will be ready for distribution to interested proponents from 20 December 2007 to 09 January 2008 at the BCDA Corporate Center. A non-refundable fee of Php 20,000.00 will be charged for the TOR and payable to the BCDA in Cash or Manager's Check.

A conference among interested oil companies is tentatively set on 11 January 2008, at 10:00 a.m., at the BCDA Corporate Center. The objective of the conference is to discuss the Property, the TOR, and other clarifications from interested proponents. Interested proponents will be informed of the final schedule and venue of the conference through the contact numbers submitted to the BCDA.

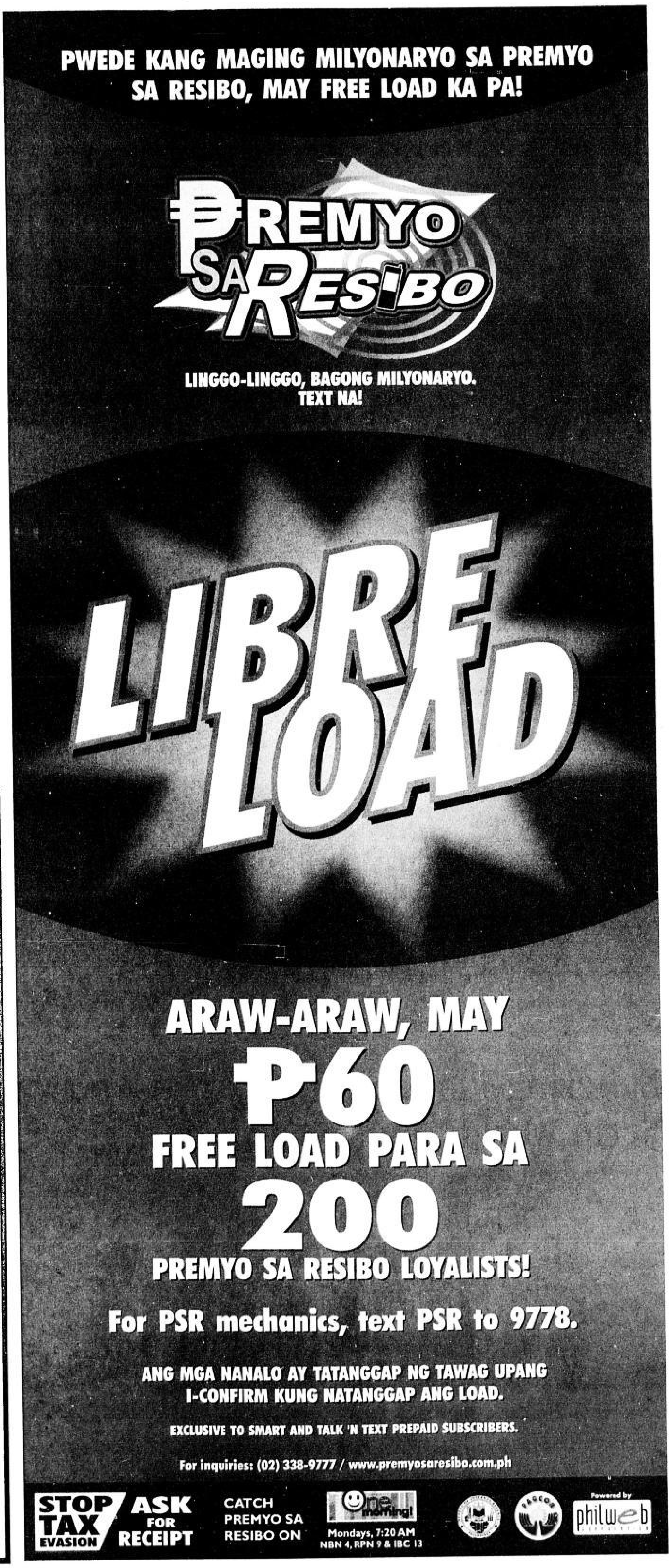
Interested proponents can direct their inquiries to:

MR. VICTOR V. ZABLAN
Asset Disposition Program Committee Phase 3
Bases Conversion and Development Authority
BCDA Corporate Center, 2/F Bonifacio Technology Center, 31st St.
Crescent Park West, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City

or they can contact Engr. Valiente R. Aquino at telephone numbers 816-6666 loc. 124 and 816-1043; email address: vraquino@bcda.gov.ph

(Sgd.) **MR. VICTOR V. ZABLAN**
Chairperson, Asset Disposition Program Committee Phase 3

(PDI--Dec. 20, 26, 2007 & Jan. 2, 2008)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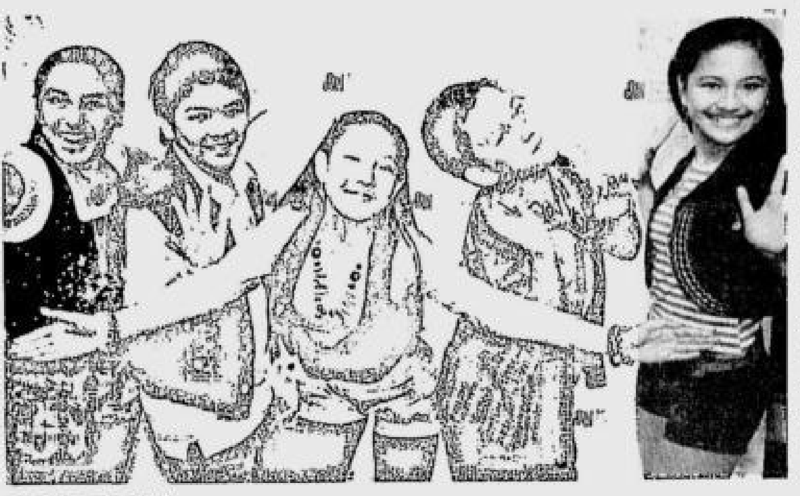
'Mystery of the Christmas Star' premieres at SM SDC

THE RECENT PREMIERE OF THE "Mystery of the Christmas Star" had some of the brightest young stars gracing this event at the SM Science Discovery Center at the SM Mall of Asia.

Young stars from ABS-CBN Megan Young, Joseph Bitangcol, and Alwyn Uytingco and Pinoy Dream Academy Emman Abatayo lent some of the their young star power to the occasion as did the Pinoy Big Brother housemates-Nene Tamayo, Dionne, Wendy Valdez, Bruce Quebral, Gianne Abraham, Miki Purss, and Zeke.


SUGARPOP Kids

More star sightings! GMA's Sugarpop Kids were also there to explore the new technologies at SM Science Discovery Center, as were the kiddie stars Quintin of "Super Inggo", Ella Guevarra of "La Vendetta", Eliza Pineda of "Flor de Luna", and Cheska Salcedo of "Marimar".

It was also family time for show biz moms Lani Mercado, Maricel Laxa, and Rina Reyes, as well as dad Lander Vera Perez, who took their kids to watch the movie premiere at the SDC's planetarium.

Hosted by NBN News Anchor Pinky Aseron, the event began with a guided tour of the Science Discovery Center's attractions-the Image Port, the Transport Nation, the Earthquake Experience, the Life Clock, and the Virtual Reef, where they interacted with Mr. T, the talking fish.

The highlight of the event was the gala premiere of the "Mystery of the Christmas Star", the story of the Three Wise Men who followed the star to Bethlehem at SDC's Digistar Planetarium.

The 2D feature seeks to solve the mystery behind the questions-"What did the Three Wise Men see that night?" "What is the significance of this heavenly body?", and "When exactly was the birth of Christ?"

In 30 minutes, you will be taken on a trip back in time to join the Magi in their journey from Babylon to Damascus to Jerusalem, and finally to Bethlehem. Through the film, you will also be able to plot a series of historical events in a timeline of centuries; and learn more about the skies and how some of the earliest astronomers took track of their discoveries and astronomical sightings. Amidst breathtaking scenery from the past and present, we will learn how we came to celebrate one of the most important dates in our calendar.

"The Mystery of the Christmas Star" is now showing at the Planetarium of the Science and Discovery Center located at the Southside Entertainment Mall of the SM Mall of Asia. For inquiries and group booking reservations, call 556-0331 or 556-0661.

'MaAga ang Pasko sa Jollibee' Year 13 brings cheer to Pinoy kids

FAVORITE FAST-FOOD CHAIN JOLlibee and award-winning actor Aga Muhlach once again team up for the biggest and longest-running toy-and-book drive in the country-MaAga ang Pasko sa Jollibee. Already on its 13th year, the campaign takes inspiration from Christmas in the Philippines, which is considered a special time for children. While local festivities are never complete without a delicious noche buena spread, colorful parols, and the sound of carols filling the air, nothing tops the whole experience quite like seeing the big smiles on kids' faces. Whether gazing admirably at huge commercial displays, tasting their favorite yummy delights, or opening the gifts so lovingly prepared for them, children's love for Christmas is infectious and heartwarming. "MaAga ang Paskó sa Jollibee", in partnership with the STI Foundation, hopes to bring this cheer to thousands of less privileged children through the generosity of people who wish to help them.

"To see a young boy's or girl's face light up with a smile upon receiving a toy or a book, even a used one, never fails to tug at my heart," said Aga, "Children have a way of showing their appreciation. I guess getting a book or a toy from Jollibee makes them happy, knowing that there are people who remember them at Christmas."

Since Nov. 12, toys and books can be dropped off at specially marked boxes in Jollibee stores all over the country. All the toys and books collected will go to boys and girls under the care of the Department of Social Welfare and Development's (DSWD) many accredited institutions. Right before Christmas, Jollibee and Aga will hold a special celebration where the toys and books will be distributed among kids. Over the years, the drive has distributed more than 1.5 million toys and books to as many Filipino children and has inspired countless companies to embark on similar programs.

"The achievement of MaAga ang Pasko sa Jollibee goes beyond numbers," said Gold Tantoco, Jollibee's new vice president for corporate marketing. "Apart from pioneering this kind of program, it puts focus on the emotional needs of less privileged children. We are thankful to everyone who has been part of the campaign. Every year, more children need to feel that they are loved. These gifts that the Filipino people course through us give these kids hope. That is our measure of success."

In appreciation for the support that the campaign continues to receive, Jollibee and Aga have included Operation Damayan, Tahanang Walang Hagdan, Sa Aklat Sisikat, Children's Library, Hospicio de San Jose, Caritas Manila, Virlanie Foundation, Cribs, Bantay Bata, Hands On Manila and White Cross Children's Home in the list of beneficiaries. These organizations were named by the media partners of "MaAga ang Pasko sa Jollibee", namely: The Philippine Star, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Manila Bulletin, Manila Standard Today, Summit Media, Daily Tribune, ABS-CBN Publishing, MMPI, Abante, Businessworld, Mirror Group of Companies and the Journal Group of Publications, all staunch supporters of the campaign since it started over a decade ago.

Toys and books donation may also be brought to select STI Schools in Metro Manila. Jollibee branches nationwide will be accepting donations until Jan. 6, 2008.

MARIAN RIVERA STARS IN NEW PLDT CARD

After conquering the hearts of millions of televiewers nationwide as Marimar, television's brightest primetime princess Marian Rivera takes over PLDT landlines as the face of PLDT Cards. Marian stars in the new PLDT Cards commercial that recently debuted in all major TV networks and is also in all major print ads. Most importantly, she graces the new PLDT Touch Card Special Edition, a remarkable promotional offering from PLDT. The PLDT Touch Card Special Edition is a free PLDT Card that can be availed at sari-sari stores nationwide. Just like PLDT Touch Card, it offers more affordable NDD rates at P3 per minute and IDD rates for as low as P8 per minute. It is also reloadable using PLDT load so you can reuse it as often as you want. Aside from the added convenience, users can rack up more minutes every time they reload with PLDT load. For every P100 reload from today until Jan. 31, you get P10 extra load automatically. Shown during the launching of PLDT Touch Card (from left) are Cristina A. Balingit, assistant vice president, PLDT Cards and Prepaid Products, Eric S. Alberto Sr, vice president, PLDT customer sales and marketing; Marian Rivera, PLDT Cards star, Dan Ibarra, PLDT retail business head, and Nerisse Ramos, first vice president of PLDT.

Insular Life Visa Credit Card launched

INSULAR LIFE, THE FIRST AND LARGEST Filipino life insurance company, has partnered with UnionBank to introduce Insular Life Visa Credit Card, a credit card with exclusive privilege for its policyholders.

Reflective of Insular Life's innovative spirit and consistent to its aim to become a one-stop full financial service institution, the Insular Life Visa Credit Card offers its policyholders the flexibility to budget their funds through a 0-percent interest over 3 months' installment when insurance premiums payments are charged to the Insular Life Visa Credit Card via the company's Premium Deal Lite!

The Insular Life Visa Credit Card also offers premium payment convenience. Policyholders may auto-charge their insurance premium payments to Insular Life Visa credit card and enjoy a wide network of payment channels for the card payment. This will ensure automatic payment of premiums, keeping the policy in-force and the insured fully covered.

And because Insular Life policyholders deserve to enjoy the good life, the Card offers lifestyle-driven benefits such as a discount program from health and wellness establishment partners, a concierge service that that will assist cardholders to access health and wealth related services, and a free access to Club Manila airport lounge in Naia1.

Cardholders will also enjoy life's simple pleasures with a privilege points program that allows them to convert points to cash rebates, get vouchers for free gas, dining and shopping, transfer to a mileage program or convert these to plane tickets.

Insular Life knows no boundaries when it comes to giving its policyholders the convenience. Insular Life Visa Credit Card gives access to a wide range of services such as worldwide acceptance, a 24/7 customer service, utility bills payment, an installment payment plan, cyberstatement and more!

The Insular Life Visa Credit Card is powered by UnionBank. UnionBank Credit Cards is the leader in co-brand and affinity credit card partnership. Today, it has 16 cobrand and affinity credit cards in partnership with retail, educational, medical, and financial and service institutions. Insular Life Visa Credit Card is UnionBank's first life insurance co-brand card. To apply for an Insular Life Visa Credit Card, call 841-8600 (for Metro Manila) and domestic toll free 1-800-1888-2277 (outside Metro Manila).

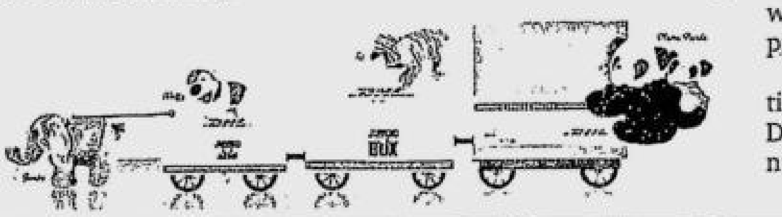
DHL launches 'Jumbo & Friends' promo

DHL, THE WORLD'S LEADING EXPRESS and logistics company, offers a special treat this holiday season. Customers who avail of DHL's Jumbo Junior, Jumbo Box or Express Pallet until Dec. 31 will receive free Jumbo & Friends collectibles.

DHL clients with Jumbo Junior transactions will receive a Jumbo, Wolfy or Tig stuffed toy. Jumbo Box transactions will get two Jumbo & Friends soft toys, while Express Pallet shipments come with a set of Tig, Wolfy and Jumbo collectibles, or one Mama Panda toy.

Gift-giving and sending packages this Christmas is now even more enjoyable with DHL's Jumbo & Friends yuletide promo. Clients who send express shipments via DHL are guaranteed reliability, quality service with DHL's All the Way commitment to address their clients' needs.

DHL Jumbo Junior, Jumbo Box and Express Pallet services are available at all DHL Service Points, DHL Service Centers and Wide Wide World Express Outlets. Call 811-7000 to avail of DHL's Jumbo & Friends Christmas promo and other DHL world-class express services.



Promo runs until Dec. 31, per DTI-NCR permit number 4207.

Schering-Plough wins 3 Scrip World Industry awards

SCHERING-PLOUGH CORP (NYSE: SGP) was honored by Scrip World Pharmaceutical recently with three top pharmaceutical industry awards: Large Pharma Company of the Year, Management Team of the Year, and Executive of the Year for Fred Hassan, Schering-Plough chair and CEO.

The Scrip Awards are designed to recognize excellence and achievement within the pharmaceutical and biotech industries. Scrip World Pharmaceutical News, a leading provider of news and analysis for the global pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries, held its third annual awards ceremony last night in London.

"We are honored and inspired by winning these three awards," said Hassan. "They are a testament to the courage and tenacity of our people around the world who have executed the remarkable transformation of Schering-Plough on our special long-term journey.

"The passion of our people for our science, for our customers and for our patients is a special strength. As we now launch our combination with Organon BioSciences, our people are uniting around that passion. We will be working hard to realize the exciting new promise of our company," Hassan said. "And we will not lose our sense of humility."

Schering-Plough is an innovation-driven, science-centered global health care company. Through its own biopharmaceutical research and collaborations with partners, Schering-Plough creates therapies that help save and improve lives around the world. The company applies its research-and-development platform to human prescription and consumer products as well as to animal health products. In November 2007, Schering-Plough acquired Organon BioSciences, with its Organon human health and Intervet animal health businesses, marking a pivotal step in the company's ongoing transformation. Schering-Plough's vision is to "Earn Trust, Every Day" with the doctors, patients, customers and other stakeholders served by its approximately 50,000 people around the world. The company is based in Kenilworth, New Jersey, and its Website is www.schering-plough.com.

A healthy Christmas diet with Jus'4 Kids Plus

PEOPLE—WHETHER THEY ARE adults, teenagers, or children-can still maintain a healthy, well-balanced diet even during the festive Christmas and the holiday season.

This is the view shared by many health professionals and dieticians.

Christmas and New Year celebrations are not normally viewed as good occasions for anyone to pursue a diet. The amount and variety of food available during the season is intimidating for people on a diet. Experts believe otherwise.

"Christmas should not mean the end of a healthy diet. We should actually be more wary of our food consumption during the Christmas season," according to Regina Peña, marketing manager of pharmaceutical toll manufacturing firm Sydenham Laboratories Inc.

Equipped with an expertise in nutrition and health, Sydenham manufactures products, such as medicines and multivitamins, and juice products under the Juslicious brand.

"Parents in particular should watch and monitor what their children eat and drink during Christmas celebrations, because young kids aren't normally conscious of the dietary consequences of their food intake," Peña added.

The key to maintaining a healthy diet for children, according to experts, is moderation. Health and diet experts urge parents and their children to avoid fatty foods, junk food, and excessive intake of sweets and candies. They also discourage over-consumption and overeating among children.

"I would also tell parents to give their children fruits and vegetables. Also, they should limit, or possibly avoid, their kids' intake of carbonated sodas or unhealthy beverages," Peña advised.

A healthier and more nourishing alternative to these beverages is Juslicious Jus' 4 Kids Plus, a product of Sydenham Laboratories.

A health juice drink formulated for kids, Juslicious Jus' 4 Kids Plus is fortified with vitamin A, iron, and iodine. With adequate intake, these micronutrients-which are recommended by the Department of Health-significantly improve the growth and development of children.

Jus' 4 Kids Plus, which comes in mango and orange flavors, is made of natural juice concentrate and puree and no artificial flavors. It is enriched with Vitamins C, D, E, and Zinc.

The juice drink also contains Chlorella Growth Factor or CGF, which promotes physical growth in children, and Taurine, an amino acid that helps in the development of the brain and nervous system.

The prestigious UK-based publication "Beverage Innovations" recently cited Jus' 4 Kids Plus, saying that the juice drink is one of a growing number of vitamin-enriched health beverages around the world that offer its target market a multitude of health benefits.

Jus' 4 Kids Plus is currently available in leading supermarkets all over Metro Manila, including Ever Supermarkets, Landmark, Robinsons, Rustan's Supermarkets, Shopwise, SM Supermarkets, South Supermarket, Valuepoint, and Waltermart. It is also available in Cavite, Bulacan, and Laguna.

ATTY. AMADOR C. DELA MERCED

former Mayor of Norzagaray, Bulacan

now peacefully rests in the infinite Grace and Goodness of the Lord
on the 18th day of December 2007 at the age of 73.

His devoted wife **Dr. Concepcion S. dela Merced,**

his children and grandchildren,

Amador, Jr. and Maria Victoria Cusi Anna, Amador Victorino & Joseph	**Gabriel and Imelda Garcia** Francis Gabriel
Regina Ignacia and Roy Movido Margarita, Beatriz & Isabella	**Marilynn and Joohan Lee** Jacob Jungwoo

relatives and friends, request your prayers
for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the Sanctuarium,
Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Saturday, 22nd day of December 2007
at the family mausoleum, Norzagaray Catholic Cemetery.

THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF CAVITE INSTITUTE
(Silang, Cavite)
Wishes to announce the demise of

DR. JOSE V. BELAMIDE

(former President of Cavite Institute)

*who peacefully joined the Lord
on December 16, 2007
at the age of 103.*

His remains lie in state at the Belamide residence at E.K.B. Heights in Bgy. Iba, Silang, Cavite.

Interment will be on Sunday, December 23, 2007 after the 2:00 p.m. mass at Nra. Sra. De Candelaria Parish.

Message of Thanks

Miguel Cuerva y Fourdinier

October 29, 1947 - December 11, 2007

The family would like to thank all those who offered prayers, masses and condoled with them in their moment of sorrow.

INQUIRER OBITUARIES

OBITUARY REQUIREMENTS:
❶ Copy of Death Certificate
❷ Any identification document (I.D.)

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WFP
World Food Programme

expresses its sympathies and condolences to the family and friends of our colleague,

Ms. Gene Luna

(August 28, 1959 - December 11, 2007)

DR. LOLITO STA. MARIA TUMBOCON

peacefully joined his Creator on December 16, 2007 at the age of 83.

His wife: **Linda M. Jesena;**

Children and Grandchildren, **Lilit & Abby** and **Pia, Patch, Pam & Emil Tumbocon; Teresa & Al** and **Jomarie & Albert Soliveres; Linda & Normann** and **Amici, Katrina, Michael & Alyssa Cabrera; Liza & Butch** and **Isabelle, Theo, Dominique, Cristina & Rafael Guevara; Eileen & Albert** and **Alexandra Lizares;** and **Tony & Gay Tumbocon;** and

Brothers and sisters, **Constancia Sallador (†), Patty Linato (†), Zoning Haresco (†), Augusto (†), Bishop Ciceron Sm. Tumbocon, D.D. (†), Sol Consing, Benny Miraflores, Leonore Conde, Meling Tumbocon & Lorna Galvan;**

Request your prayers for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the Sanctuario de San Jose, Greenhills East Subdivision, Mandaluyong City.

Interment will be on Sunday, December 23, 2007 after the Necrological Service at 2:30 p.m. at the Chapel of The Heritage Park, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, Metro Manila.

In lieu of flowers, cash donations for the continued schooling of his scholar seminarians will be greatly appreciated.

"Eternal life will swallow up that which can die. God made us for this very reason and He has given us the Spirit as a guarantee that we will live again." —2 Corinthians 5:4-5

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PAMBANSANG PANGASIWAAN NG PATUBIG
(National Irrigation Administration)
Bancasi, Butuan City

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The National Irrigation Administration, CARAGA, Regional Office, Butuan City through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites contractors registered with and classified by the Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) to apply for eligibility and if found eligible, to bid for the hereunder contract:

Name of Contract	: Lateral D Canal Concrete Lining
Location	: Bancasi and Dumalagan, Butuan City
Brief Description	: Excavation, Trimming and Concreting of Canal Including Coarse Sand Bedding
Approved Budget for the Contract	: P 8,407,146.52
Contract Duration	: 180 Calendar Days

Prospective bidders should possess a valid PCAB License applicable to the contract, have completed a similar contract with a value of at least 50% of the ABC, have key personnel and equipment (listed in the eligibility forms) available for the prosecution of the contract. The BAC will use non-discretionary pass/fail criteria in the Eligibility Check/Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids. The BAC will conduct post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference, Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).

The BAC will issue to prospective bidders Eligibility Forms at the Regional Office, Bancasi, Butuan City, upon their submission of LOI, and upon their payment of a non-refundable amount of P 500.00 to the cashier of the National Irrigation Office, Bancasi, Butuan City, starting on January 3, 2008. Prospective bidders shall submit the Eligibility Requirements to the BAC at the said address. They may also obtain the results of the Eligibility Check by the BAC at the same address.

The BAC will issue Bidding Documents only to bidders declared by the BAC to be eligible for the bidding, upon payment of a non-refundable amount of P 5,000.00 to the cashier of the National Irrigation Administration, Bancasi, Butuan City.

The National Irrigation Administration, Regional Office, Bancasi, Butuan City, assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of their bids.

Approved by:
(Sgd.) **MEDEL P. MAWILE**
BAC Chairman

Noted:
(Sgd.) **DEMOCRATICO P. GRANA, JR., CESO V**
Regional Manager

(PDI – December 20 & 27, 2007)

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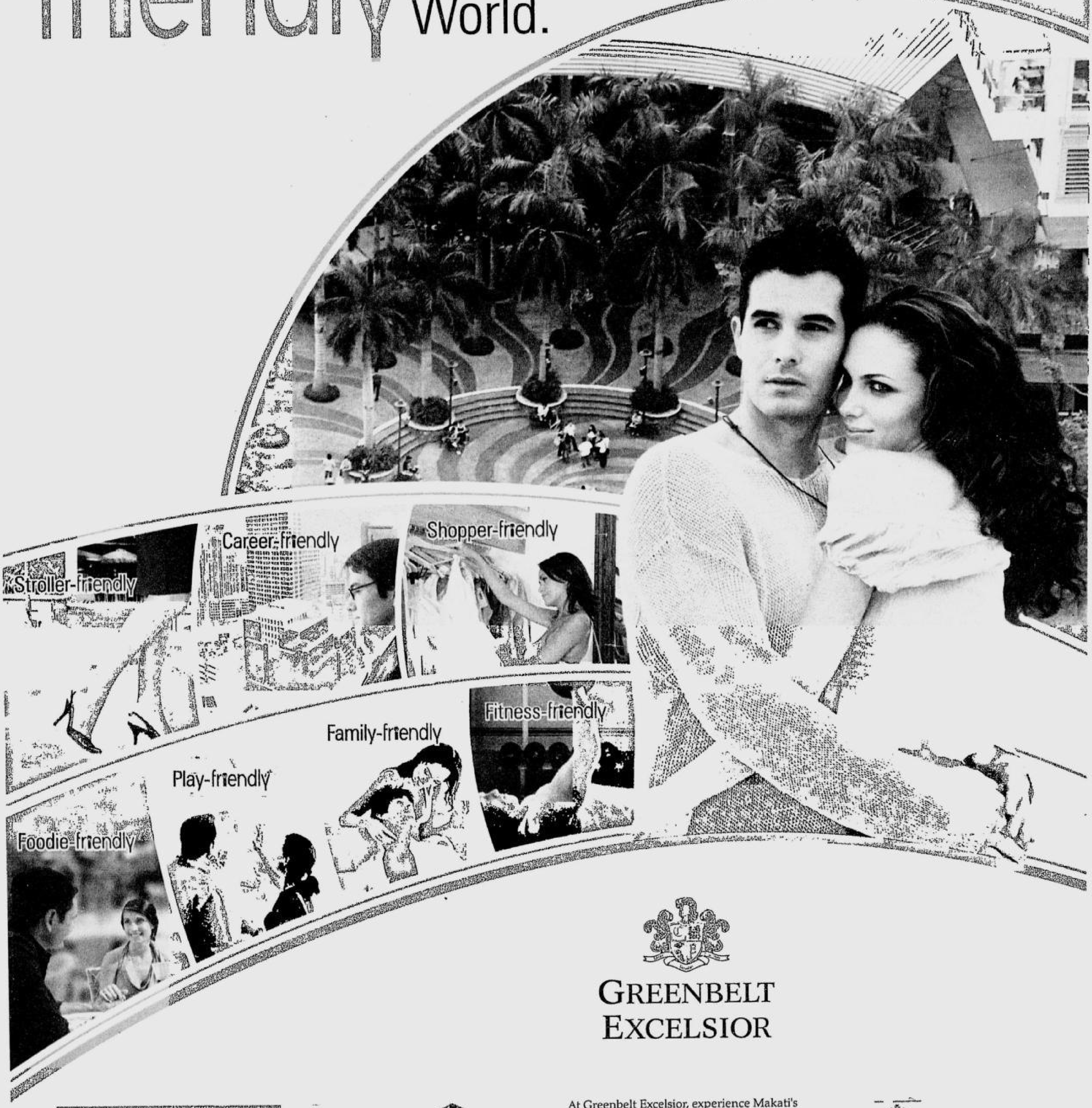
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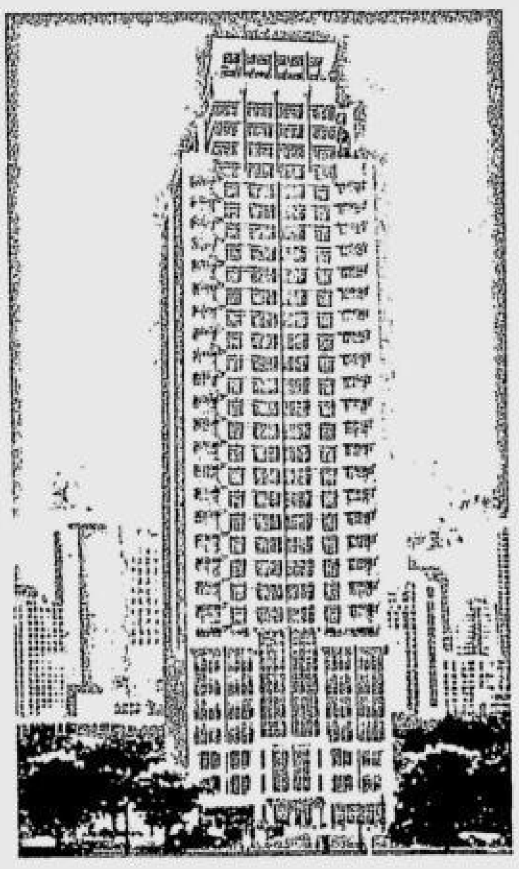

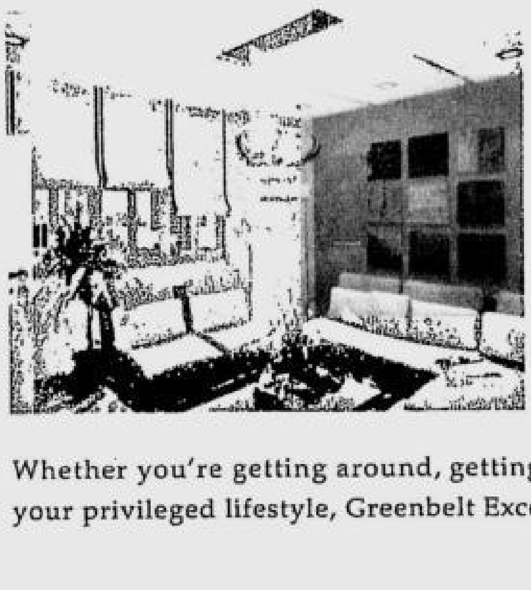

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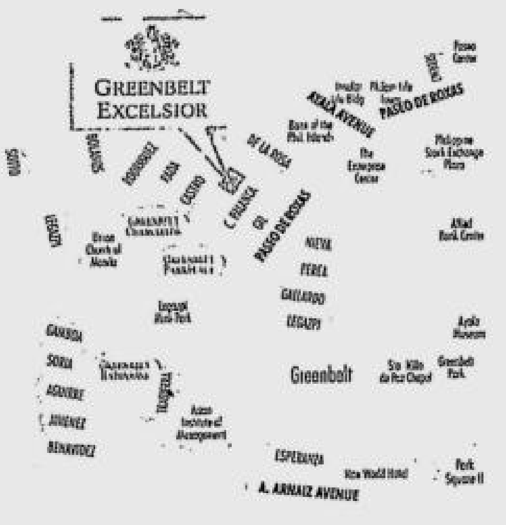
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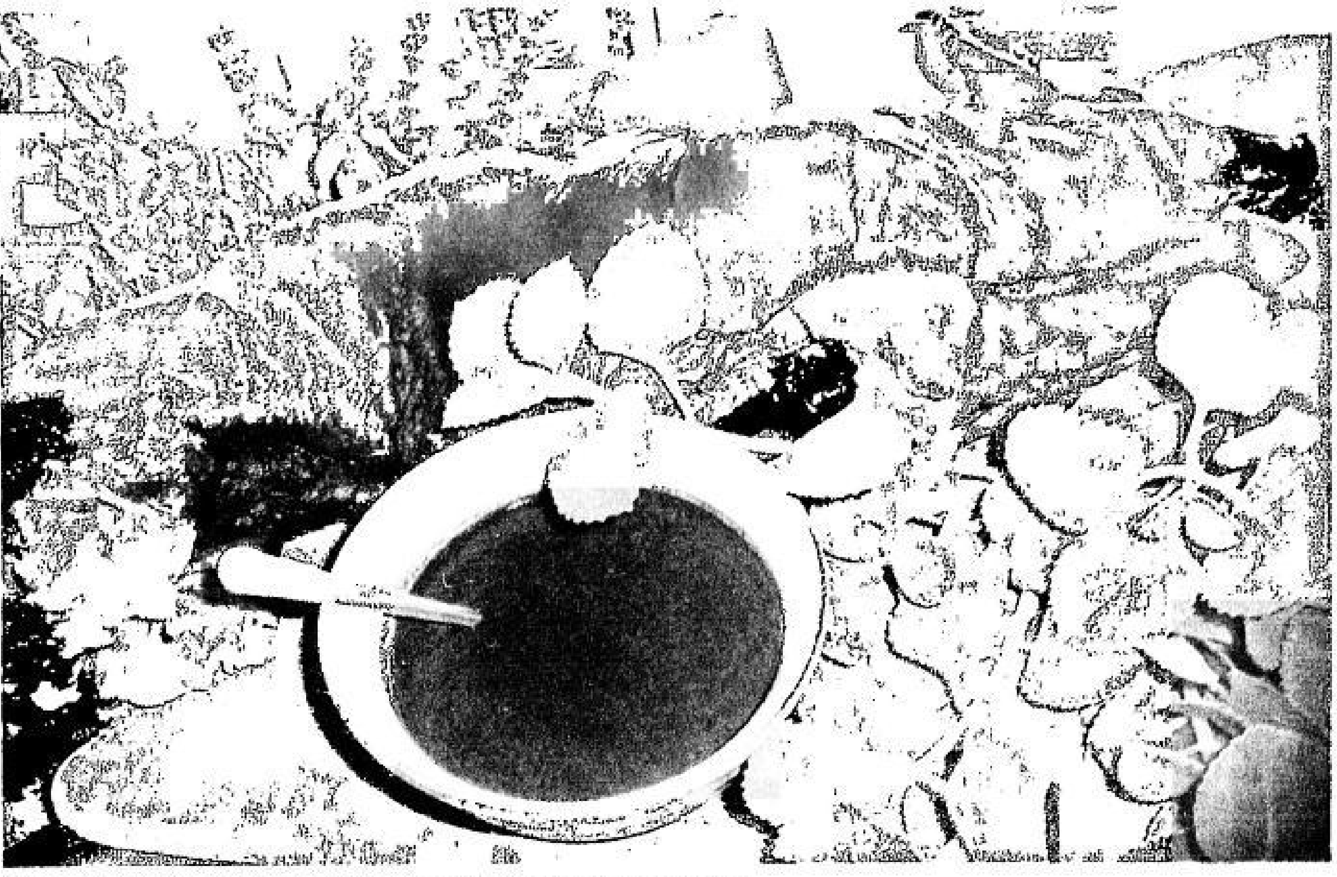


SARAMSAM'S *lechon* made aromatic with oregano and local basil

COUNTRY COOKING
Micky Fenix

The changing dining scene

MY SISTER IS HOME FROM Panama where she is based. She will only stay a short while so there will be no long trips out of town.

But, like all families whose members are coming home for the holidays, the nagging question is where to take the *balikbayan* to eat.

The question is also asked by Filipinos abroad who want to know where they can eat when they come home. Because I live in Metro Manila, most of my recommendations are around this area. It makes it easier for me when I know what kind of dish they miss.

Of course there is nothing like a home-cooked meal. Or food bought from specialists. But, for variety, *balikbayans* are taken out to sample the local restaurant scene.

Not just 'carinderia'

My trips to Ilocos Norte and Leyte have shown me that there are restaurants that are no longer in the mold of the *carinderia* and *turo-turo*.

Just as the houses of overseas workers' families have changed the landscape in the provinces (for better or worse), the new restaurants have changed the dining scene.

Some still do regional cooking, though tweaked a bit. And usually the ambience is something to talk about.

In Leyte, just a short drive from downtown Tacloban, guests were welcomed to the Rafael farms and garden in a vine-covered station. An open-air walk led to the restaurant, a structure that reminded some visitors of the upscale resort huts in Bali, Indonesia. All around, the landscaped place was green with grass and plants.

In the dining area, one wall was colored a fashionable red with touches of green. Two sides were open. In the one that looked out to a garden and a pond, conversation areas were created with sofas and interesting coffee tables.

All the dining tables were covered with crocheted tablecloths. Some chairs had backs of woven abaca and seats covered with *banig*.

The menu showed local dishes that one can say is Filipino, but not necessarily Leyteño, cooking. We had fish *sinigang*, a salad of the vegetables that they said was grown in the farm and *turon*. In the pastry display case, the mini cakes were what you could get from any urbanized towns in the country.

Most of the diners were *balikbayan* and their hosts. We saw relatives that we did not even know were visiting.

The owner is Rene Tampi. He started with a restaurant in Tacloban called "Join Us" and a produce shop that sold meat, ready-to-cook food and vegetables. Tampi is a young entrepreneur who decided to stay and do business in his home province.

Well-made lodgings

Having traveled throughout the country, very few lodgings impressed me. But, in Ilocos Norte, we stayed in well-made hotels and resorts.

Casa Doña Emilia in Paoay is a two-story building, small and unpretentious with a homey feeling but with touches of sensible interior design that uses the products of Ilocos such as the wooden furniture, Vigan tiles and *abel* wall hanging.

What is more important is that it is clean and comfortable, the plumbing works, the beds allow you to sleep peacefully and the air-conditioner works. The food is good traditional cooking and the staff of owner Bobby Diaz allows you to go to the kitchen to watch them work.

Across the Paoay church, the Herencia Café is known for its *pakbet* pizza. But the vegetables with cheese somehow do not work as well as the *longanisa* and *bagnet* version.

The interior consists of antique chairs and *baul*. The mural in the dining area shows Sitio Remedios in Currimao. It gave us an idea of where we were to stay the day after. Dr. Joven Cuanang owns both the café and the resort.

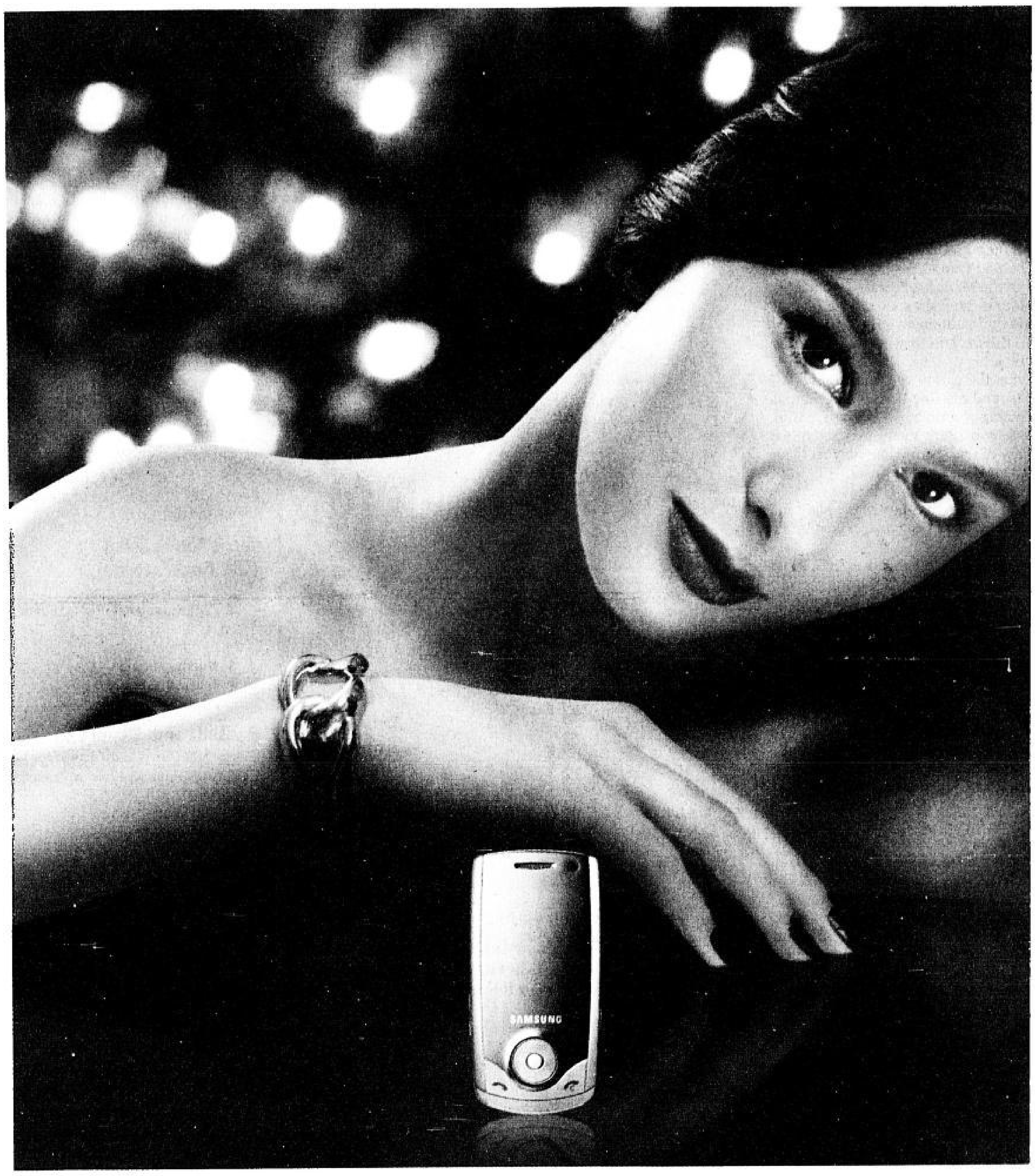
But the resort looks infinitely better than the painting. Again, there was a collection of antique furniture amid modern amenities.

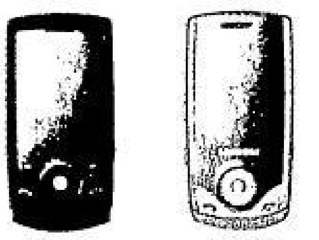
Updating the provincial

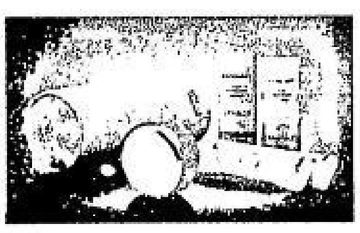
A more updated take on provincial cooking was at Saramsam Café of Sammy Blas. Its small elongated space has wooden ta-

THE CHANGING/ C3

THE SINFUL ***bagnet*** **pizza at Herencia Café**







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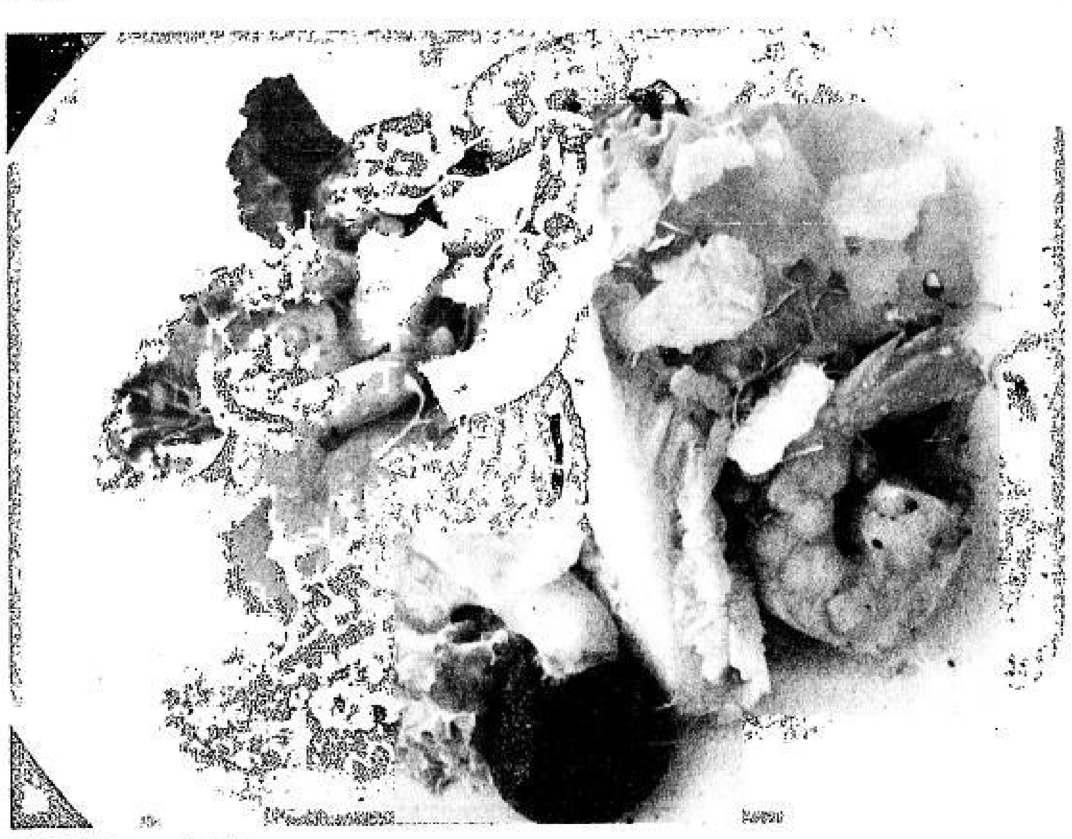
BRAISED Lamb Shank

Chef's Quarter may be just the place for occasional indulgences and celebratory meals



TESSIE Tomas Salad

Fine dining on a budget

Text by Linda B. Bolido
Photos by Romy Homillada

TWO VETERANS IN THE FOOD BUSINESS have decided there is no reason why fine dining should be the privilege of a select few.

Larry Cortez and chef Mauro Arjona Jr., the pair behind Duo at Serendra that draws the likes of the Madame, Imelda Romualdez Marcos, found the right spot for their "total innovation of fine-dining cuisine" at the new Midtown, the expansion wing of Robinsons Place Ermita.

Located at the corner of Adriatico and Pedro Gil Sts. and offering both indoor and al fresco dining options, Chef's Quarter Brasserie & Wine Bar's menu may seem not for ordinary diners, even when they feel like treating themselves to a nice meal.

But, with several main courses available for less than P400, it may be just the place for occasional indulgences and celebratory meals.

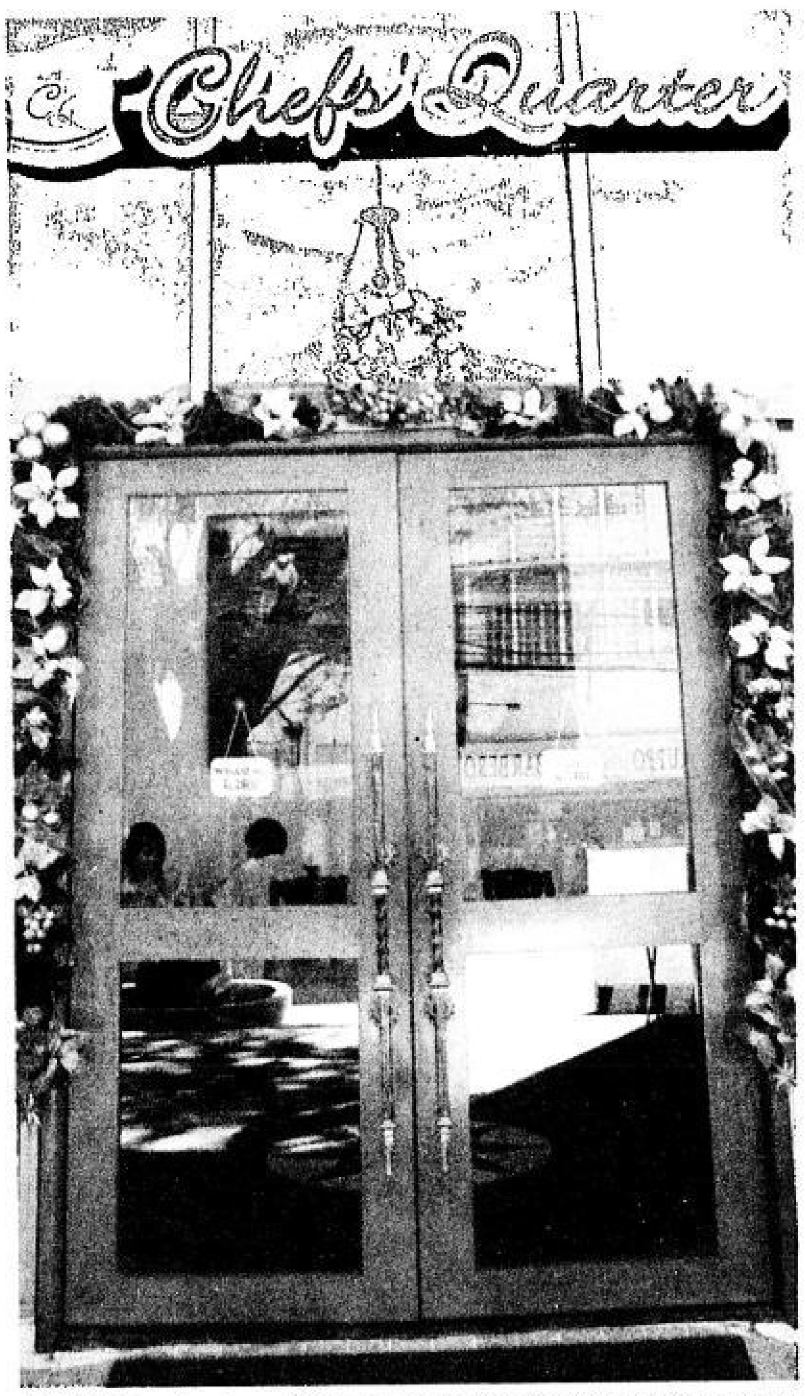
Options include Grilled Baby Back Ribs, Braised Lamb Shank, Chef's Quarter Steak, Sole Fillet Bonne Femme and Grilled Lapu-lapu Fillet.

Six days a week there is a set lunch for P450 per person, with a choice of fish or meat for main course. More elaborate—and naturally more expensive—versions are also available.

Open from breakfast to dinner (7 a.m.-11 p.m.), the restaurant is ready to accommodate whatever the customer feels like—steak for breakfast and just salad for lunch or dinner.

A mainstay on the menu and definitely an attention-grabber is the Tessie Tomas Salad, named after the Imeldific's occasional alter ego.

So far, bestsellers for the new restaurant are, for breakfast, Sole Fillet Tocino with scrambled egg and garlic rice, Salmon Gravad Lachs with hash brown potato and scrambled egg, Beef Steak Tagalog with garlic rice, scrambled egg and fried aubergine (eggplant), and Steak and Egg with grilled tomatoes and shiitake mushroom served with sunny side-up egg and garlic toast bread.



CHEF'S Quarter dons a festive look. Featured inside are the works of artist/actor Ernie Garcia, including special floral tiles for the tables.

Other salads that are popular with diners are Marinated Salmon Carpaccio Trio, Seared Tuna Sashimi, Caprese and Escargot and Mushroom.

In-demand pastas are Spaghetti Carbonara, Stir-fried Paella, Baked Three Cheese Lasagna with Bolognese Sauce, and Chef's Quarter's own concoction.

Ribs, steak, fish and other seafood are, as to be expected, selling well.

Chef's Quarter will be open for lunch and dinner on Christmas Eve and will offer a choice of Roast Turkey or Roast Beef. Closed on Christmas Day, it will reopen on Dec. 26.

For both New Year's Eve and New Year's Day, it will offer a choice of turkey or lamb for lunch and dinner.

Tessie Tomas Salad (Old Time Favorite)

35 g assorted mesclun
50 g marinated salmon (gravad lachs)
2 pc grilled prawns
2 pc grilled shiitake
.05 micro arugula
.05 basil chiffonade
40 ml creamy balsamic

Braised Lamb Shank

1 pc 300-350 g lamb shank
1 pc eggplant (cut into cubes, fried)
1 c rice risotto

Cilantro curry sauce

5 g curry powder
.05 gcilantro
200 coconut milk
50 g tomato diced
50 g onion diced
stocks if needed

Procedure:

- Season the lamb with salt and pepper.
- Sear in a black pan for coloring.
- Sauté the onion, tomato and curry powder.
- Add coconut milk and cilantro.
- Place the lamb shank and braise until tender and tasty.
- Add salt and pepper to taste.
- Add stock if needed.
- Make sure the meat of the lamb is almost loosened from the bone before serving.

Chef's Quarter Brasserie & Wine Bar is at Level 1, Midtown Wing, Robinsons Place, Adriatico corner Pedro Gil Sts., Ermita; 3813449/3817716/5671910; e-mail chef's quarter@yahoo.com

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PEPPERED Steak

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Paella Pilipina

1 c *malagkit*
1½ c long-grain rice
5 c chicken stock
1 tsp Mama Sita's *achuete* powder
2 tbsp olive or vegetable oil
1 pc *chorizo*, cut into ½-inch diagonal slices
1 1/3 c shrimp, peeled and deveined
7 pc squid, small, cut into ¼-inch diagonal rings
1 tsp garlic, minced
½ c onions
2 pc tomatoes, cored, de-seeded and chopped
1 pc red bell pepper, minced
1 tbsp *patis*
3 tbsp Mama Sita's Caldereta Mix
2 pc medium-size blue crabs, split in halves
1 1/3 c *tahong*
1 1/3 c *halaan* soaked in water for 30 minutes to remove sand
1 pc red bell pepper, cut into strips
1 pc green bell pepper, cut into strips
2/3 c green peas
1 pc hard-boiled egg, cut into round slices (optional)
2 tbsp spring onions, chopped for garnish

In a pot, combine the glutinous and long-grain rice. Rinse twice. Drain. Return to pot and add 4½ c chicken stock and Mama Sita's Achuete powder. Stir until well-blended. Bring to a boil, lower the heat, and simmer. Cover and cook until done, about 20 minutes. Turn off heat and allow to cool for at least 10 minutes. Set aside.

In a *paellera* or a large sauté pan, heat oil. Sauté chorizo for a minute. Reserve. Sauté shrimp for about two to three minutes. Reserve. Add squid, sauté for one minute or just until it changes color to milky white. Reserve.

In the same pan, over high heat, sauté garlic and onion for 30 seconds. Add tomatoes and minced red pepper. Sauté for one minute.

Add fish sauce, the remaining ½ c stock and Mama Sita's Caldereta Mix. Bring mixture to a boil, lower the heat, and arrange crabs on top. Cover and simmer for five minutes.

Add mussels and clams. Continue to simmer for another three minutes or until shells open. Remove cover.

Stir in red and green bell pepper strips and peas. Cook the mixture for another minute.

To finish, add the annatto rice, *chorizo*, shrimp and squid. Toss until the mixture is well-blended.

Garnish top with boiled egg and spring onions, if desired. Serve hot.

Makes eight servings.

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THE CONSUMER

Snail may be faster than PhilPost

By Linda B. Bolido

TO CALL THE KIND OF SERVICE FERNANDO T. Tobias got from the Philippine Postal Corp. (PhilPost) office in Laguna snail mail will probably be an insult to the mollusk.

Tobias of Santa Cruz said he expected to get a letter from Los Baños in the same province. The letter bore the prospective recipient's complete address, including zip code, and had a P7 postage stamp. It was mailed on Nov. 9.

By Dec. 6, almost a month later, Tobias still had not received the letter.

He said when he complained to the postmaster in Santa Cruz, the PhilPost official was apologetic but said an ordinary letter was harder to trace than registered or priority mail.

I am sure our friend Hector R. R. Villanueva, postmaster general and Philpost chief executive officer, will be unhappy to hear about this kind of service. So, if he is reading this, perhaps he can direct the Laguna post office to try to find out what happened to the letter. Just because it is ordinary mail is no excuse to treat it like garbage.

This kind of service will defeat any efforts by PhilPost officials to make the agency profitable. It is guaranteed to lose PhilPost its few remaining clients.

E-mail and short messaging service are almost instantaneous. And while private courier service is expensive, at least you can compel delivery companies to find out what happened to a missing package.

Clean and green Christmas

Young members of a Catholic community in Manila recently helped to spread the message of eco-friendly holiday celebration.

Twelve children and youth volunteers, made to look like Christmas gifts, stood by the doors of the Malate church to give parishioners tips on a green Christmas.

Behind them was a big green, red and yellow banner saying "Malinis at Luntiang Pasko, Regalo kay Kristo at sa Inang Mundo."

The children reminded churchgoers of the need to avoid wasteful consumption during the holidays.

The initiative was jointly undertaken by the Care for the Earth Ministry of the Our Lady of Remedies Parish in Malate and the EcoWaste Coalition.

Fr. John Leydon, MSSC, parish priest, said, "Celebrating Christmas in a way that prevents further harm and trauma to the environment is a right step toward the conversion that we all need to make as beneficiaries and stewards of God's creations."

Fr. Leydon added, "Let us honor the babe in the manger by not trashing Christmas."

The "gift boxes" offered different R's, what individuals and groups can do to reduce trash during the holidays. They included:

- Restore Christ, born in simplicity and poverty, as the principal reason for the joyous celebration.
- Review Christmas plans and expenses, cut unnecessary purchases and use savings to help families in need.
- Reduce climate changing emissions by conserving electricity and avoiding holiday garbage at all times.
- Reuse stuff like Christmas decorations as many times as possible.
- Repair broken things before buying new ones.
- Recover materials for recycling or composting by separating discards at source.
- Recycle more and patronize recycled products.
- Return kitchen, garden and other organic discards as compost to nourish depleted soil.
- Refuse plastic bags and opt for *bayong* and other reusable eco-bags and containers.
- Reject the cycle of wasting by declining things that cannot be reused, repaired or recycled.

Send letters to The Consumer, Lifestyle Section, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Ave. cor. Mascardo and Yague Sts., Makati City; or e-mail lbolido@inquirer.com.ph

Holiday pleasures in Baguio

THE MANOR AT CAMP JOHN Hay in Baguio City has lined up various activities for the holidays.

With the opening of the Ginger Bread House, Le Chef Deli makes available traditional Christmas treats like Fruit Cakes, Continental Christmas Cookies, Stollen, Christmas Cakes, Christmas Puddings and Mince Pies. Also available are Christmas hampers and special wines.

Until Dec. 25 , Baguio's best choirs sing Christmas carols at the lobby. On Dec. 24 and Dec. 31 at 5 p.m., Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve Masses will be held at garden.

Chef Billy King is preparing special Christmas Day and New Year's Eve dinners. On Dec. 24, there will be a mini Noche Buena.

The Noche Buena buffet will be served 10:30 p.m.-2 a.m.

Christmas Day and New Year's Eve spreads include Bone Ham in crispy bread dough, Roasted US Rib-Eye, Roasted Leg of Lamb with Jus and Mint Jelly, Beef Wellington and Roasted US Tom Turkey.

Christmas dinner is 6-10 p.m.

On New Year's Eve, diners get two complimentary glasses of sparkling wine 15 minutes before the New Year countdown.

Call 074-4240931 loc. 1058 and 1017 or 074-4240907).

The changing dining scene

From page C1

bles and chairs. What serves as the buffet table is the small display area by the window.

We had *lechon* stuffed with aromatic oregano and the local basil. The sauce had liver mixed in with a bit of pork blood.

Using the *empanada* crust recipe, thin, round wafers were made to be eaten with a salsa of tomatoes, onions, mango and cilantro. The same salsa was placed on top of spaghetti noodles.

We had traditional *miki* that did not look hodgepodge, half an egg peeping out of the noodle soup arranged neatly in each bowl. The *bibingka* with crushed peanut on top was in neat wedges.

What Sammy showed was that an updated look did not mean the traditional was lost.

Our last day was lunch at Mom's Country Kitchen run by Eya Cabanos, a busy caterer who squeezed our meal into her schedule. While her catering includes very Continental dishes like roast beef, she let her guests enjoy Ilocano cooking including small *empanadas* cooked on site.

She had *adobo, kilawing baboy* (vinegar-cured boiled pork) and seashell soup. I did not know I missed eating the sautéed green chili (*siling haba*) I first tasted years ago on an Ilocos food research. There it was, not hot, safe to eat by those who cannot stand hot chili.

THE DINING counter at Rafael Farms and Garden, Leyte

Eya's spread emphasized Ilocos vegetables. She had a *pakbet* of fresh garlic. And she made several salads of *talbos ng upo* (sprouts of fuzzy gourd); *rabong* (bamboo shoots); *katuday* or *katuray* flowers and green beans. What caught my eye was the *balayba*, a freshwater plant, because of its other name—"I shall return."

Eya explained that it was a vegetable that could not be digested by the body so looked exactly the same when expelled.

You learn something new every time.

E-mail the author at pinoyfood04 @yahoo.com

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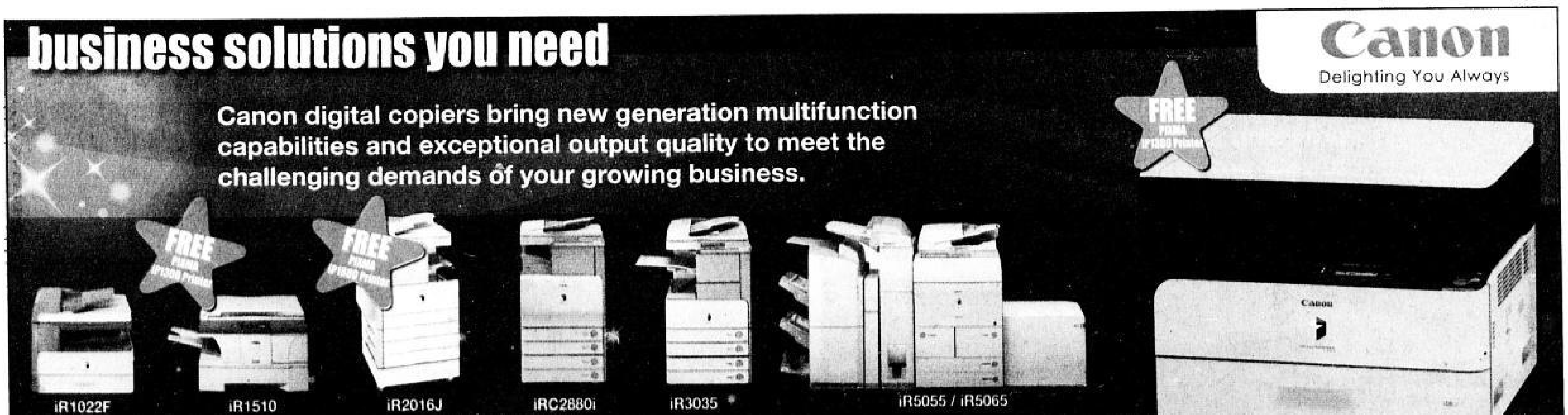

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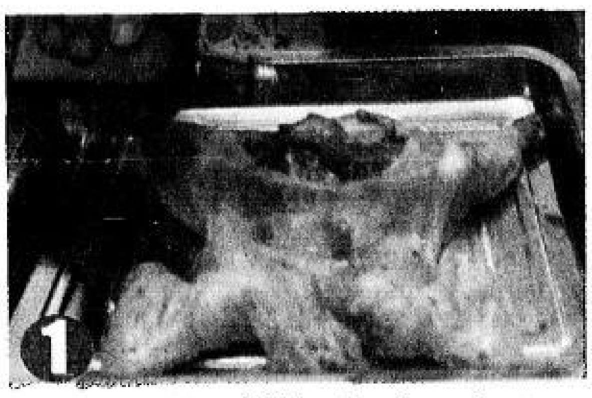
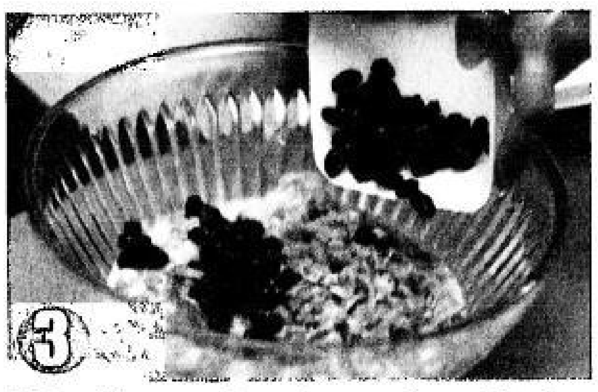
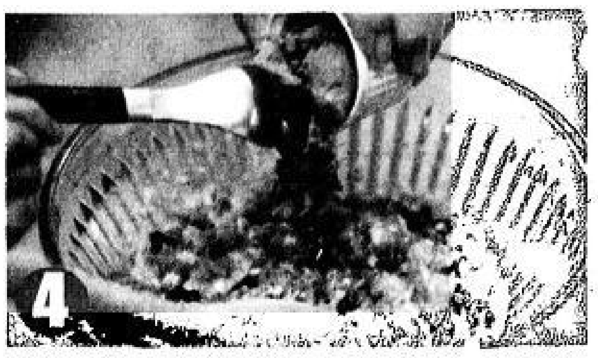


MARINATE deboned chicken in *calamansi*, soy sauce and pepper for an hour. Set aside.

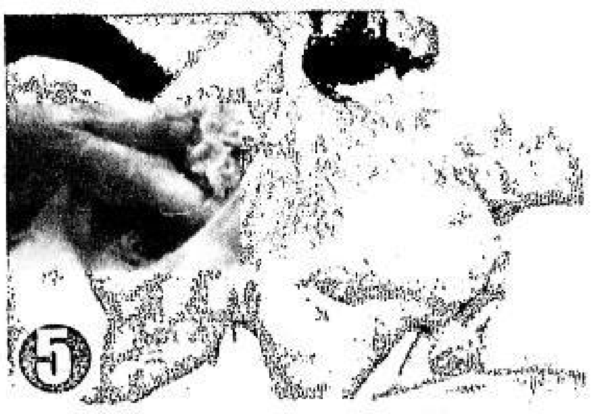
IN A BOWL, mix together ground chicken, ground pork and white onions.



ADD raisins, sweet ham, cheese and peas. Blend well.

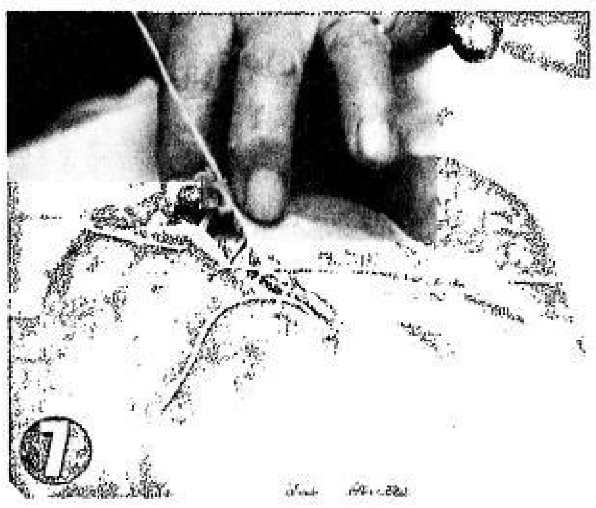


ADD pickle relish, liver spread and beaten eggs. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Mix thoroughly and set aside for few minutes.

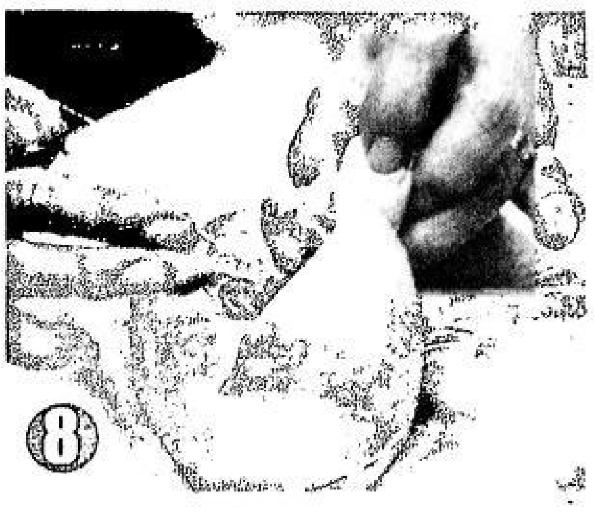


CLOSE neck portion of the chicken with cotton string so the meat filling remains inside. Drain chicken and stuff mixture into the cavity, eliminating air pockets as you move from neck to rear.

ALONG with the stuffing, insert four hard-boiled eggs (two under the wings and two near the legs) and four pieces of sausages arranged lengthwise. Make sure not to overstuff chicken as steaming tends to expand stuffing.



SEW up the cavity.



TIE the chicken legs together with a string.

A 'secret' dish for the holidays

Text by Vangie Baga-Reyes
Photos by Jim Guiao-Punzalan

EVEN AT 71, CECILIA "CELY" PEREZ-Sesdoyro never fails to whip up her best-kept secret dish for the season of celebrations. Her Chicken Galantina is a mainstay during holidays and other family get-togethers.

She learned the recipe when she was 25 years old from her half-Filipino, half-Spanish mother-in-law, Conchita Diez—from deboning the chicken to marinating to steaming and precise slicing.

Galantina is stuffed deboned chicken wrapped in cheesecloth or aluminum foil then steamed or boiled until done. The stuffing is usually a combination of ground pork, sausage, ham, carrots, pickles and cooked eggs.

Galantina is sliced thinly then served cold usually with gravy.

Sesdoyro's version is more flavorful and richer as she adds liver paté to stuffing. She does not use carrots as it gives a different flavor to the mixture.

She also omits the gravy as the chicken is already juicy and savory enough.

For four decades now, Sesdoyro has been filling orders from family and friends. But now she has decided to slow down a bit, accepting only a few orders.

Here, Sesdoyro shares her famed chicken recipe she named Galantina a la Conchita after her mother-in-law.

Materials needed include boning knife, mixing bowl, clean *katsa* or thick cheesecloth, big stainless steel needle and gauge-20 cotton string, steamer and aluminum foil.

To make deboning easier, make sure the chicken is really cold before you begin. Or ask your *suki* in the market to debone it. Sesdoyro buys her chicken at Farmer's Market and Nepa-Q Mart.

Steaming time for chicken is about an hour starting from the moment the water boils. Otherwise the chicken will be undercooked.

Galantina can be prepared ahead of time and kept frozen for a month. Then you can add it to your *noche buena* table. It can be an appetizer or a paella side dish, or served Pinoy-style with garlic fried rice.

As appetizer, make thinner galantina slices; as main course, slices should be thicker. The dish can also be used as *palaman* for breads.

For orders, call or text Sesdoyro four days in advance at 0927-8432736.

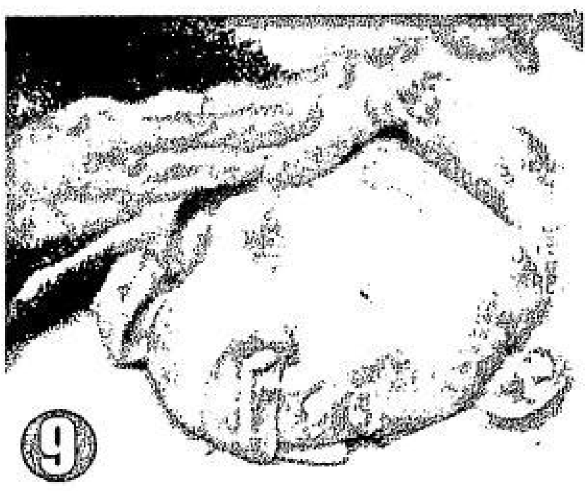
Ingredients

1.3 k tough-skinned (culled) chicken or chicken, dressed, deboned except for legs and wings. Avoid puncturing the skin, otherwise sew up any holes before marinating.

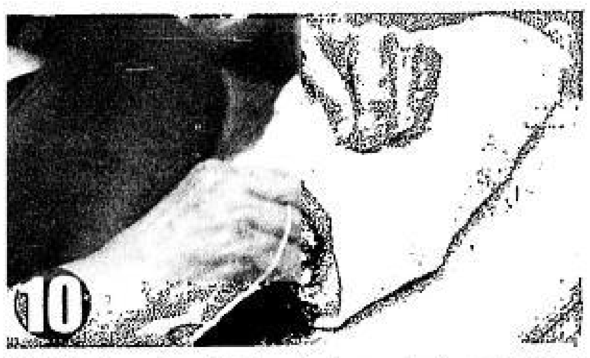
Marinade:
2 tbsp *calamansi* juice
1 tbsp soy sauce
Stuffing:
¼ k ground chicken
330 g ground lean pork
¼ k sweet ham, chopped
½ c sweet pickle relish
1 c grated cheddar cheese
¼ c green peas
½ c white onions, minced
¼ c raisins
1 small can liver spread or potted meat
2 medium-size eggs
1 can chicken Vienna sausage
4 large eggs, hard boiled
1 level tbsp rock salt
1 tsp white pepper
Steaming liquid:
2 pc chicken broth cubes
3 c water

For suggestions, e-mail the author at vbaga@inquirer.com.ph

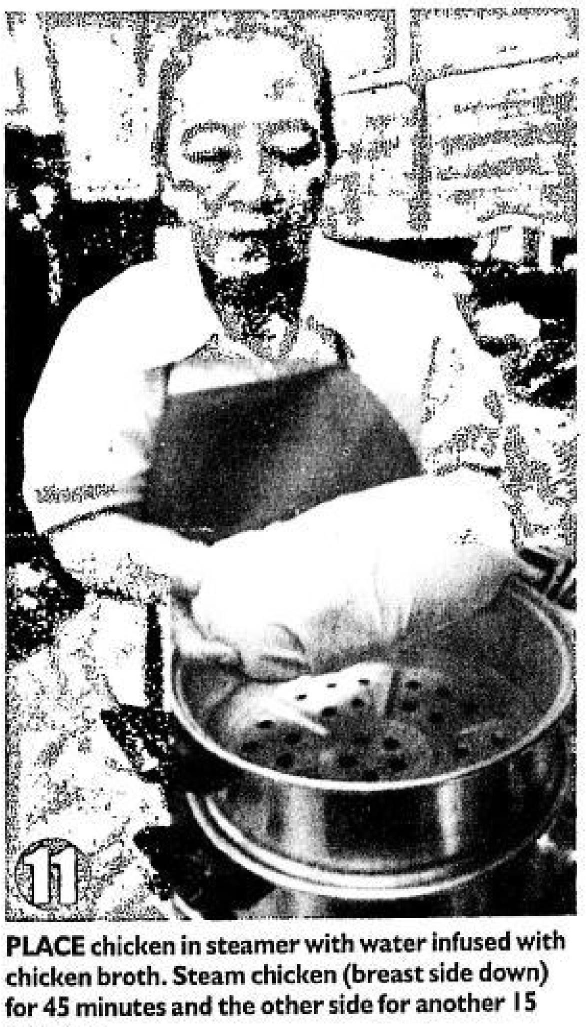
Step By Step



MASSAGE softened unsalted butter onto entire chicken.



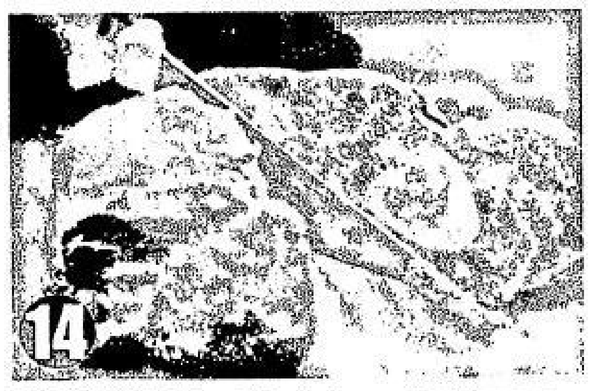
WRAP the entire chicken in cheesecloth and sew up.



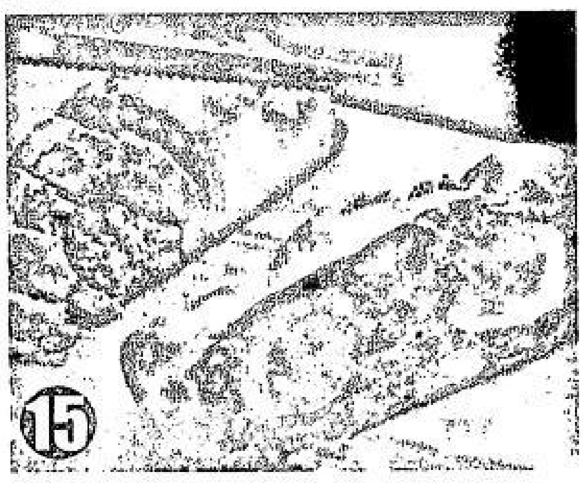
PLACE chicken in steamer with water infused with chicken broth. Steam chicken (breast side down) for 45 minutes and the other side for another 15 minutes.

COOL chicken at room temperature before removing cheesecloth. Take off the strings. Wrap in sturdy foil and refrigerate (do not freeze) for several hours until chilled through.

GENTLY take out legs and wings and arrange nicely on a platter.

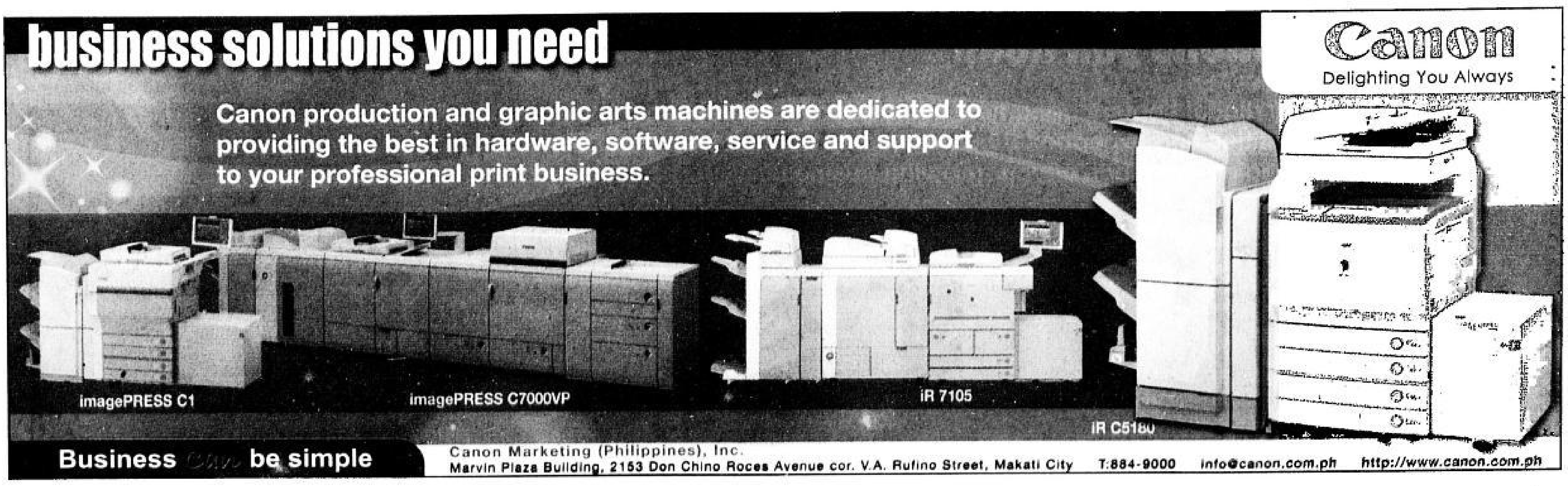


GALANTINA is best sliced when cold with a very sharp knife. Cut chicken in the center.



THEN make smaller slices. Serve on platter garnished with curled spring onions, cucumber slices, bell pepper and lettuce.

GALANTINA a la Conchita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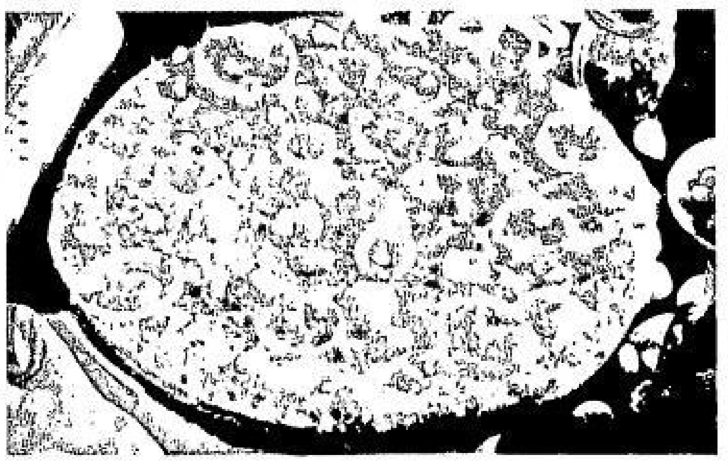
DINING OUT



NEW PIZZA AT EASTWOOD CITY
Yellow Cab, the reliable pizza delivery company, has more unique offerings. It just launched the Roasted Garlic and Shrimp Pizza, a savory pizza topped with shrimp, roasted garlic and onion rings in wine-butter sauce. Also available are Potato Halves, half-portions of baked potato topped with cream, cheese and bacon bits. Yellow Cab's Eastwood City branch is at City Walk I, 4212222, text 0917-8EWCITY.

Yuletide specials

CROWNE PLAZA GALLERIA MANILA CARRIES ON ITS TRADITION of serving *foie gras* during the holidays. This year, Seven Corners Restaurant is presenting a mini ala carte offering of *foie gras* specialties including creamy *foie gras* pumpkin soup raviolis and pan-seared *foie gras* salad with red grape reduction. For entrées, choices range from tuna loin and nori-wrapped *foie gras* to roasted duck breast with seared *foie gras*. Buffet stations will be dotted with *foie gras* creations from salads to sushi, etc. Xin Tian Di will offer *foie gras* dumplings and steamed buns, as well as *foie gras* "spiked" entrees. A Christmas *foie gras* buffet will be offered Dec. 25 (tel. 6337222).

MAKATI SHANGRI-LA offers Christmas brunch on Dec. 25, 10 a.m. at the hotel's Quezon Ballroom. The brunch buffet includes New Zealand Rib-eye and Roast Turkey. The buffet is priced at P1,650 (adult) and P825 (kids) Call 8400884 or 8138888 loc 7588/7599.

DUSIT HOTEL'S Gourmet, available until Jan. 6 are traditional Christmas treats like Stollen, Panettone Gocce, Alstadt Impression, Plum Pudding, Chocolate Candy House, Chocolate Basket with Pralines, Fruit Cake. Cold and hot selections like Orange Flavored Duckling Terrine with Cumberland sauce, Roast Turkey Roullade with Pistachio Nuts, Roast US Rib Eye of Angus Beef with Peppercorn Sauce have to be ordered at least four days in advance. Different Christmas Hampers are also available. Dusit Gourmet is at the G/L Dusit Hotel Nikko, Ayala Center, Makati. Call 8673333 loc. 3356.

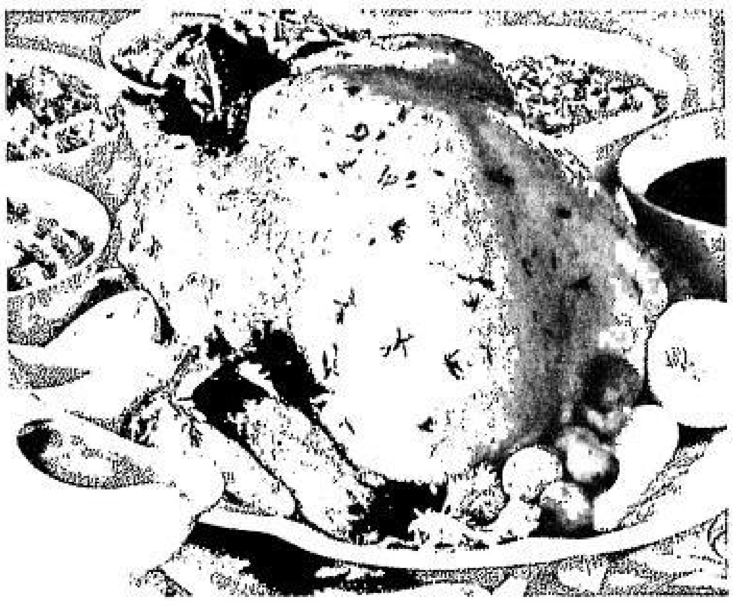
MANDARIN ORIENTAL MANILA presents yuletide offerings. On Christmas Eve, Paseo Uno offers holiday dinner buffet at P1,988++ (adult), P1,288+ (child), 6-11 p.m.; Tin Hau, P1,588+ and P1,788+ per person (minimum two persons), 6:30-10 p.m. (regular a la carte menu also available; The Tivoli, dinner set menu at P3,180+ inclusive of one glass of champagne (adult), P1,900+ (child), 7-10:30 p.m. Christmas Day dining offerings include: Paseo Uno, gourmet lunch buffet at P1,688+ (adult), P988+ (child), 12 noon-2:30 p.m.; and dinner buffet at P1,988+ (adult), P1,288+ (child), 7-10:30 p.m.; Tin Hau's lunch and dinner festive set menus at P1,388+ to P2,488+ per person (minimum two persons), 11:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. and 6:30-10:30 p.m.; or The Tivoli's lunch set menus, P1,980+ and P2,480+ (adult), P1,180+ and P1,480+ (child), 11:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.; and dinner set menus, P1,980+ and P2,480+ (adult), P1,180+ and P1,480+ (child), 7-10:30 p.m. A gingerbread house is on display at the lobby and showcases Mandarin's three signature hampers (P5,500-P9,500) and other holiday offerings.

CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS AT BURGOO. The restaurant offers Supreme Sampler (combination of Burgoo's favorite appetizers such as Mozzarella Sticks, Buffalo Chicken Wings, Sta. Fe Spring Rolls and Onion Rings), Shrimp and Ribs Platter (served with flavored French fries and corn-on-the-cob) and the Seafood Jambalaya, among others (tel. nos 9277424, 8981815, 6875254, 7263578, 9136112, 5560091 or 6336256).

Gift of bread

PAN DE MANILA, THE BAKERY THAT brought back the traditional *pan de sal*, is offering the Bread Box. The breads are freshly baked every hour inside old-style *pugon*. All the breads contain no preservatives, artificial flavors or colors. They are also made with quality ingredients like bromate-free flour. Complement the Bread Box with Pan de Manila's Pandan Packs with assorted spreads. One pack contains Spanish sardines in spicy corn oil, extra-virgin olive oil, and tomato. The other pack has all-natural peanut butter and coco jam. Also available as guava, mango, and *guyabano calamansi*. Pan de Manila is open 24/7 (6360468 or 0917-8072290).

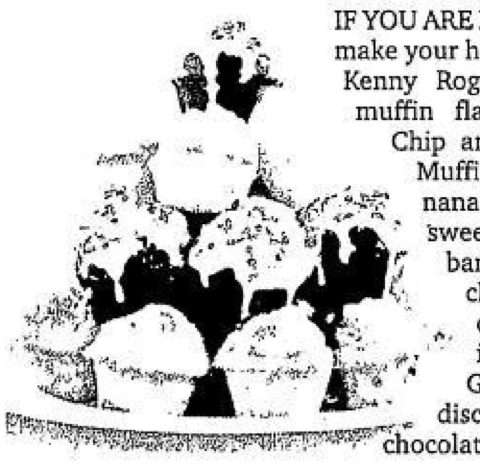
CHEF Eli of Aurelio's Catering offers his specialties for the holiday season: US Roast Turkey with choice of meat, apple and apricot, and oyster stuffing, Rich Chicken Relleno, Lechon de Leche, US Roast Black Angus Ribeye or Top Blade and Honey Baked Virginia Ham (7267321, 7269329, 0920-9201883, 0920-8434749).



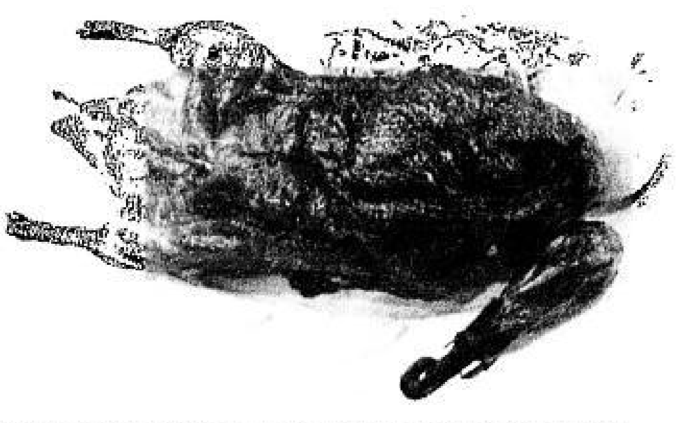
Party trays

ENJOY THE HOLIDAYS MORE BY LETTING THE EXPERTS help you. Bizu Private Caterer's offers Party Trays this Christmas, sets that can feed 10-15 people. The Party Trays include everything from appetizers to desserts. Bizu offers appetizer trays, petit sandwich trays, rice and potato trays, salad trays, pasta trays, entrée trays and petit dessert trays. Bizu is also offering a special Roast Christmas Turkey with apple, chestnut and sausage stuffing with all the trimmings. Orders must be made at least two days in advance (tel. nos 8126451 or 8126027 loc 102). Trays may be picked up at Bizu's main kitchen on Pasong Tamo, Greenhills Promenade branch or Greenbelt 2 branch (e-mail privatecaterer@bizupatisserie.com; visit http://www.bizupatisserie.com).,

Sweet and new treats



IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR WAYS TO make your holiday spread special, try Kenny Rogers Roasters' two new muffin flavors: Caramel Banana Chip and Sugar Glazed Choco Muffins. Kenny's Caramel Banana Chip Muffin has the sweetness of perfectly ripe bananas and chocolate chips, with a sweet layer of crunchy caramel. Bite into Kenny's Sugar Glazed Choco Muffins and discover a deliciously moist chocolate muffin.

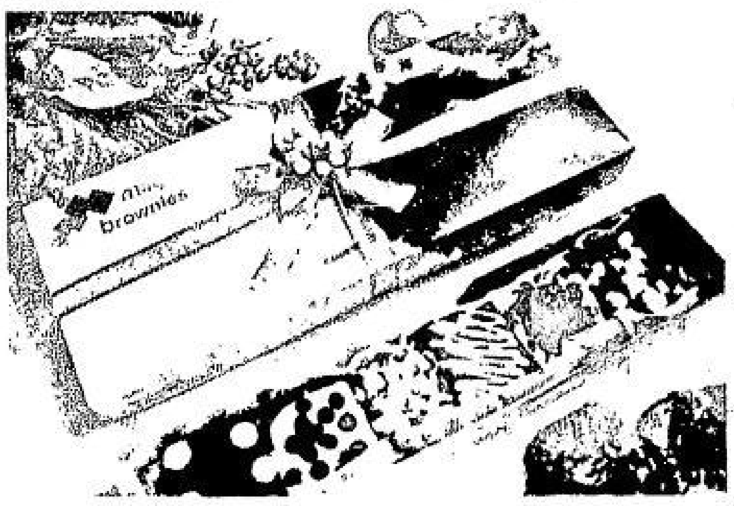


AUTHENTIC PEKING DUCK FOR NOCHE BUENA. Peking Duck, the Chinese delicacy whose origins date back to the Yuan Dynasty (1206-1368), is made available to Filipino families this Christmas season by Yitang Roast & Tea House at the Cherry Foodarama in Antipolo City (e-mail: unisonadvertising@yahoo.com; tel. 681-0950/1424 loc 234).

Eat and be merry

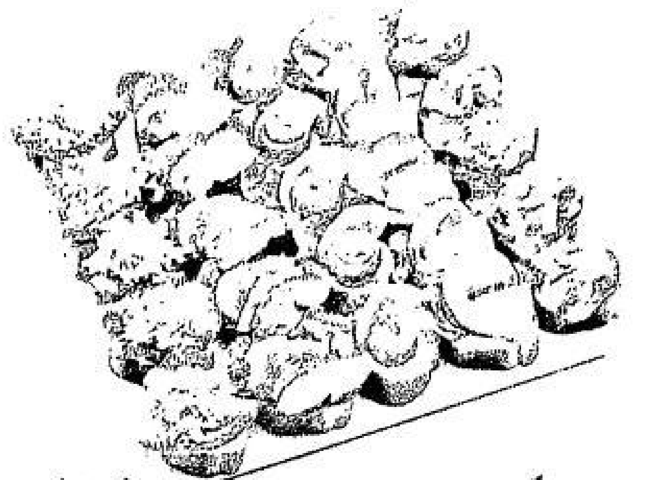
THIS CHRISTMAS, LOOK for the 'M here, my place logo in select food establishments and enjoy instant discounts and freebies upon presenting your Metrobank Credit Card.

At Masas, Mezze and Temple Bar, for instance, a 10-percent discount will be given Metrobank Credit Card holders. Using your Metrobank Credit Card (Classic Visa/MasterCard, Gold Visa/MasterCard, Femme Visa, Value MasterCard, M MasterCard, M Lite MasterCard, Go MasterCard, PSBank Classic/Gold MasterCard, Peso/Dollar Platinum MasterCard and Gold Dollar MasterCard) becomes highly rewarding this holiday season at establishments with the 'M here, my place logo.



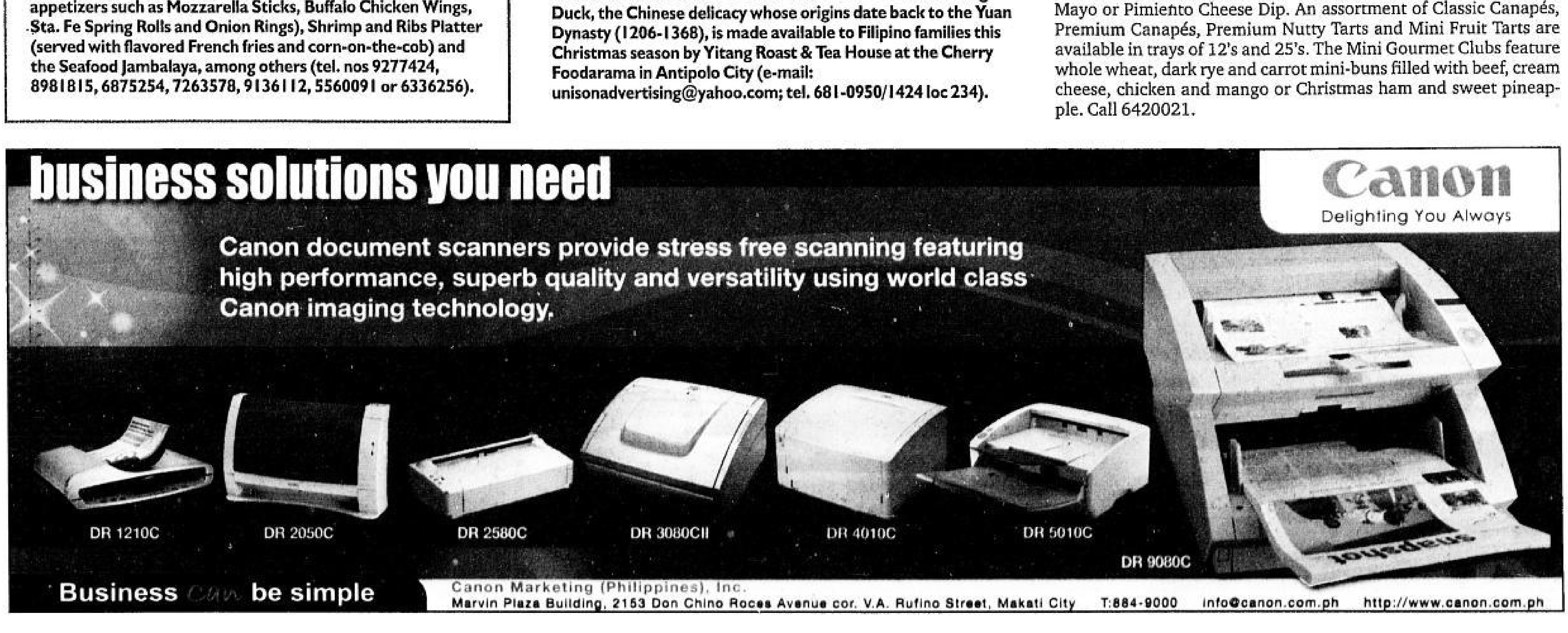
Christmas goodies

FRUIT MAGIC'S NEW MAGIC BROWNIES ARE AVAILABLE IN two flavors—Magic Fudge and Magic Gourmet. Made of the finest chocolate, the Magic Brownies Collection is made extra special for the yuletide. It is nicely wrapped, complete with a burgundy ribbon and a personalized gift card, making it a suitable ideal Christmas gift for loved ones, friends, and business associates. The Magic Brownies Collection is available in select Fruit Magic stores and Fruit Magic Fitness First outlets. Call 3646927 or 3643621; visit www.fruitmagic.com.



Holiday party packs

DELIFRANCE OFFERS SET PARTY PACKS THAT YOU CAN MIX and match. The Baguette Chips and Dip set comes with thinly sliced toasted baguettes with a choice of Egg Mayo, Tuna Onion Mayo or Pimiento Cheese Dip. An assortment of Classic Canapés, Premium Canapés, Premium Nutty Tarts and Mini Fruit Tarts are available in trays of 12's and 25's. The Mini Gourmet Clubs feature whole wheat, dark rye and carrot mini-buns filled with beef, cream cheese, chicken and mango or Christmas ham and sweet pineapple. Call 6420021.



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Homemade specialties for holiday gifts

ILUSTRADO RESTAURANT AND PASTELERIA Ilustrado chefs are offering homemade specialties for gifts to family, friends and associates.

They are packed in Gold or Silver totes; silk bags with the Ilustrado logo at P1,500 and P1,000, respectively.

The Gold Tote is filled with a bottle of Shiraz red or white wine, a spicy cheeseball with spreader, a pack of Lavosh flat bread, a pack of puff pastry bread sticks with parmesan cheese and Farmer's Carrot Walnut loaf topped with cream cheese icing. The Silver tote also contains a bottle of Shiraz red or white wine, duck liver paté in cup, a supersized *monay* and a rich Choco Banana loaf.

Three types of Paella are available: Ilustrado, mixed meats and seafood; Marinara, all seafood; and Bacalao, salted cod fish, in family (for six) or party (for 10) sizes.

Vegetarian Paella is made with Mediterranean-style eggplant, zucchini, bell peppers marinated in olive oil, herbs and pesto.

Traditional Spanish dishes like Callos Madrileña and Lengua con Setas also come in party and family sizes. Other dishes are Roast Beef, Leg of Lamb, Leg of Ham, Roast Turkey with chestnuts and brown rice stuffing, Norwegian Salmon baked in fresh dill and hollandaise.

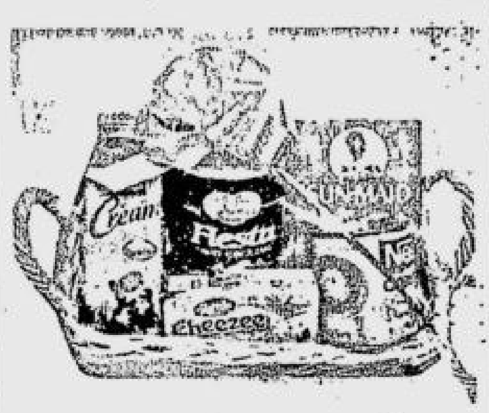
Other gift ideas are Duck Liver Pate in ceramic jar and Spicy Cheeseball (*queso de bola*) in garlic, olive oil and bacon.

Ilustrado's bakeshop offers breads, pastries and cakes. They include *ensaimaditas*, *empanaditas*, brownies, butterscotch, timmi bars, caramel bars, choco-banana loaf, Farmer's Carrot Walnut loaf, Spiced Apple loaf and Brownie Caramel tarts.

Supersized breads weighing a kilo each include Egg Monay, Cheese Pimiento Twist (P150), and Sultana. Lavosh is a flat crunchy bread flavored with oregano, paprika or black sesame with ginger.

Other items available are ham and sausage.

Ilustrado Christmas Tienda 2007 is available at Intramuros, tel. nos 5273674-75, 5272345; Metcafé at Metropolitan Museum of Manila, 5361566 or 5211517; Café Ilustrado SM Makati, 8186760; Pasteleria Ilustrado, Gateway Araneta Center, 9133320; Café Ilustrado, SM North Edsa-The Block, 0906-3272307; Café Ilustrado, Serendra, 8560947; Pasteleria Ilustrado, Alabang Town Center, 0919-8459503; Pasteleria Ilustrado, Festival Mall, 0920-6660933; and Ilustrado Restaurant and Wine Bar, Westgate, Alabang, 7711276, 7711782.

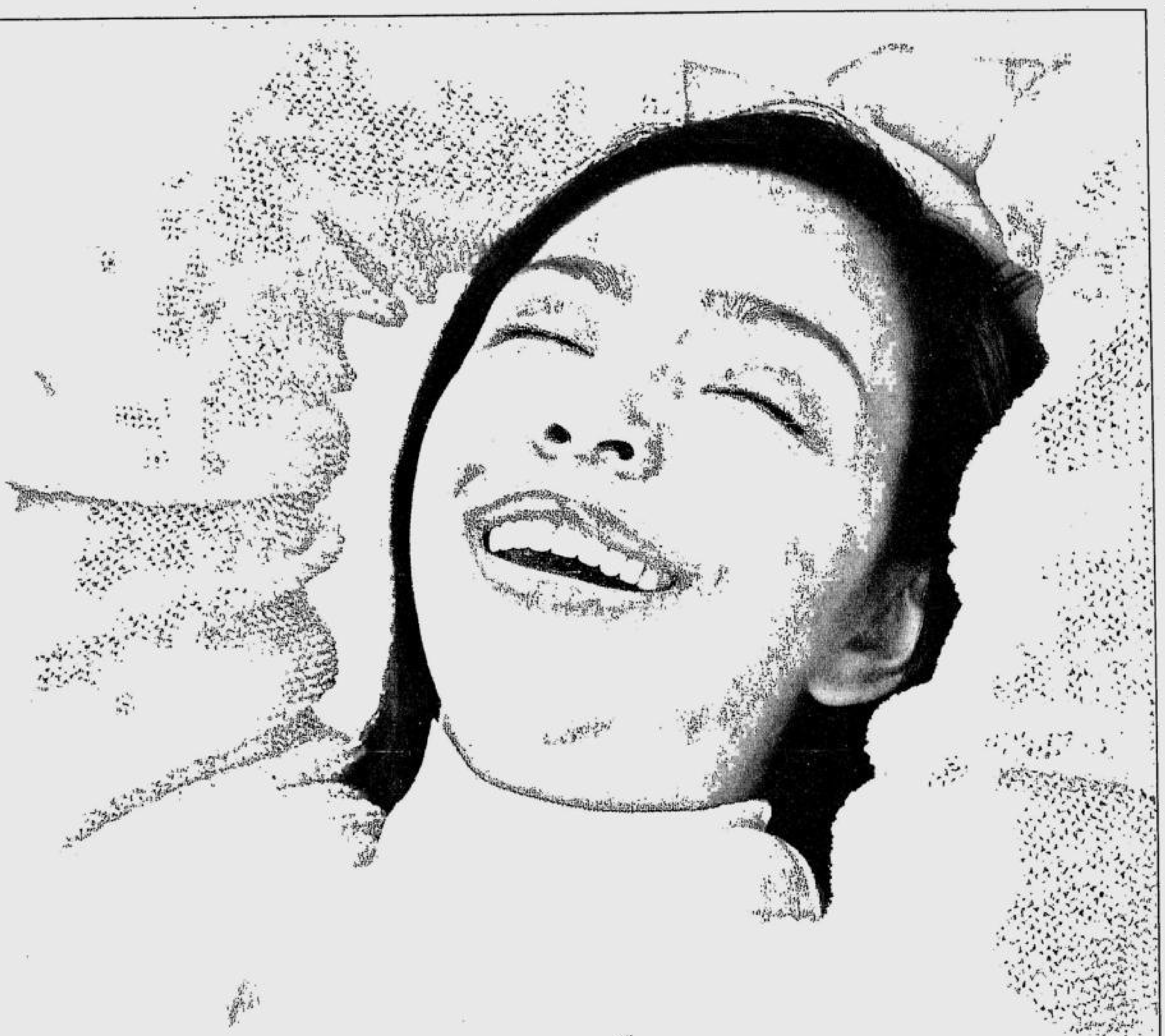


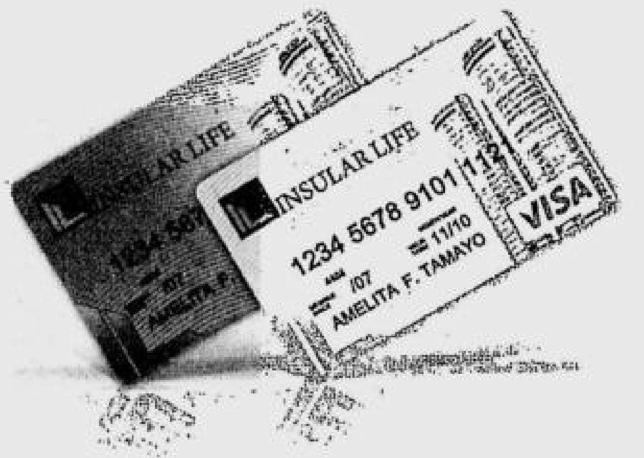
Baskets of holiday goodies

YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY about the Christmas rush with Golden Gate Supermarket's affordable Christmas packages.

Golden Gate offers set packages ranging from P200 to P1,500. You can also make your own Christmas package. Choose from their extensive list of Christmas goodies like Magnolia's Queso de Bola, DM Fiesta Fruit Cocktail, DM Pine juice, Royal Spaghetti, Roel's Pear-shaped ham and many more. Shoppers who spend P999 or more get a free treat—a multipurpose container.

Golden Gate Supermarket is at St. Francis Square Ortigas Center (telefax 2508405, 045-7411022 or 0922-8222513).





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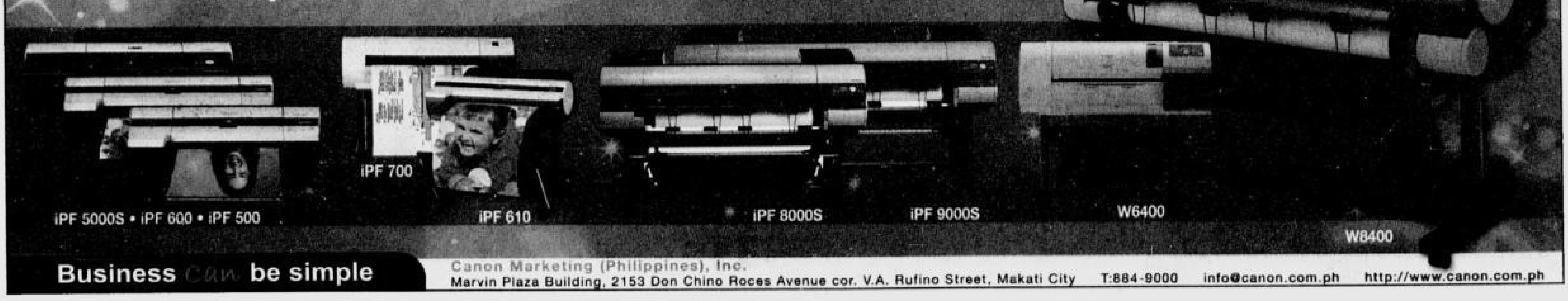

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TRIVIA 12 Which of the following animals is very popular because of his loyalty and ability to keep secrets?
ANS. a)Tiger b)Dog c)Rooster d)Dragon
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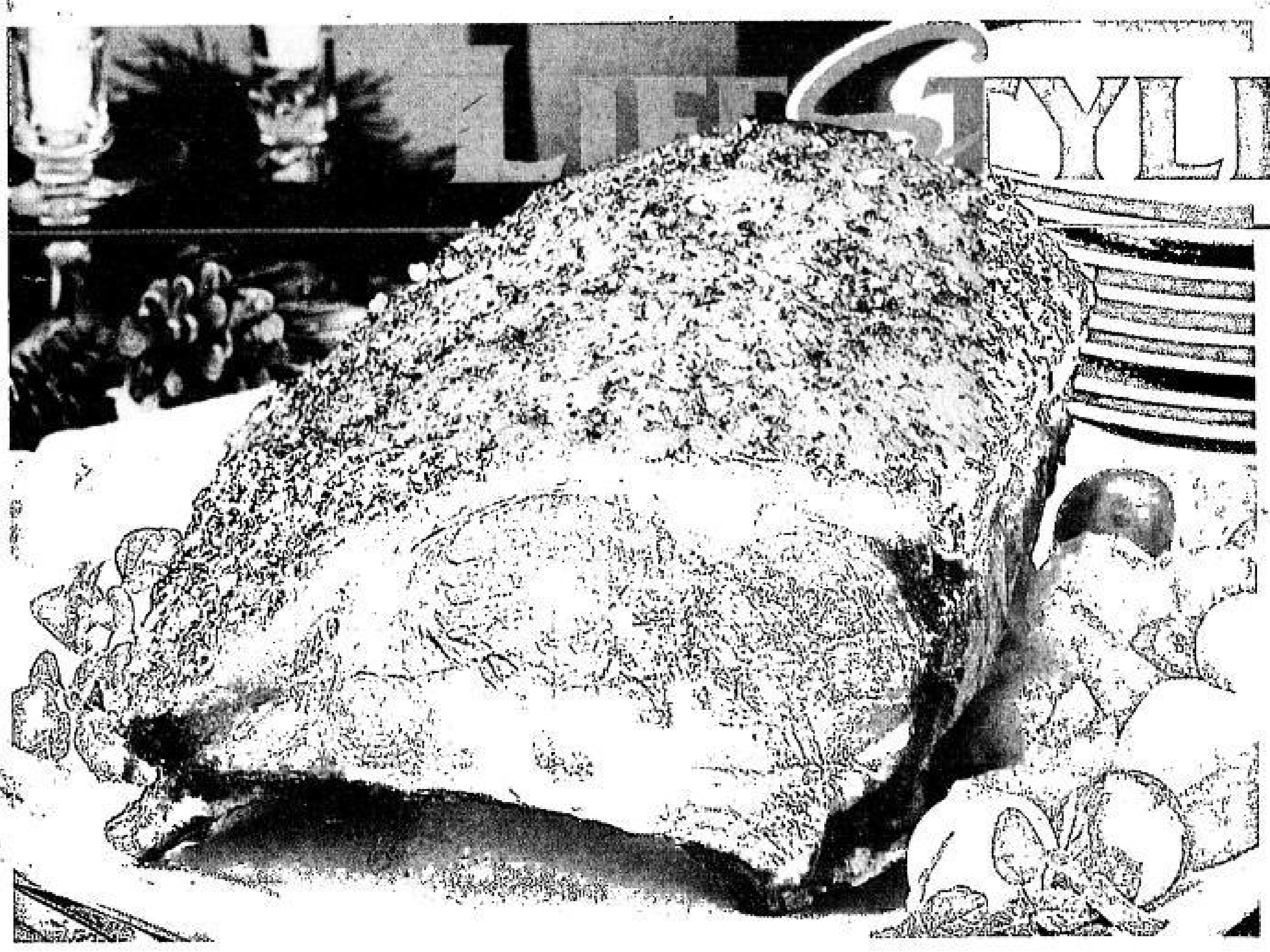

This delicious slab of beef will be a welcome addition to Noche Buena fare

PRIME Rib Roast
PHOTO COURTESY OF US MEAT EXPORT FEDERATION

KITCHEN RESCUE

Reggie Aspiras

Prime addition to the Noche Buena spread

ASIDE FROM *LOLO, LOLA, TATAY, NANAY, ate, kuya, tito, tita*, another *balikbayan* is back, getting a better "booking" than my sister Vicky, who will not be arriving until the 26th!

After a long absence, the first shipment of the most elegant of beef cuts, bone-in US prime rib, is in town, making it in time for Noche Buena!

No, it did not come wrapped in imported towels inside *balikbayan* boxes but in crates, assuring us of a steady supply whenever and wherever we want.

So how does one make perfect roast beef? Fret not. Here are facts and techniques provided by the United States Meat Export Federation and my recipe.

Our way of wishing you and all those dear to you a Merry Christmas! May the delicious slab of beef bring you the immeasurable joy that only good food brings!

Maligayang Pasko po!

Prime Rib Roast facts and techniques

"Prime Rib means that it comes from the beef rib section, which contains the least connective tissue, and the word 'prime' is generally the top or highest grade of meat and contains the most marbling effect, both of which make it the most juicy and tender meat cut.

"Because beef rib cuts are more tender, 'dry heat' roasting is preferred. This means you do not cover or add liquid, which is called 'moist heat' cooking, used to tenderize tougher cuts of meat.

"There are several methods for cooking a beef rib roast. There is the slow method where the oven temperature is set around 200-225°F and the meat is cooked at a rate of 23-24 minutes per pound.

"The second and probably the most popular, is using a medium heat of 325°F and cooking for 17-20 minutes per pound. Another method is a searing method where the roast is cooked at 450°F for 25-30 minutes and then at 325°F for 13-15 minutes per pound or until the meat thermometer reaches 5°F under desired temperature. This is because the internal temperature will continue to rise about 5°F after it is removed from the oven." (Medium rare temperature range is 130-140°F)

General roasting guidelines

"Place the roast in a shallow roasting pan and allow it to 'rest' out of the refrigerator for 30 minutes. Preheat oven to 450°F. Combine the remaining ingredients. Rub the meat surface with olive oil mixture.

"Place the roast in a preheated oven for 15 minutes or until the roast begins to brown. This will sear the roast and seal the juices. Reduce the heat to 350°F and continue cooking 26-32 minutes per pound for a bone-in roast.

"A meat thermometer is [needed] to test the degree of doneness. Remove the roast when the thermometer reads 5°F below the desired doneness, and allow meat to rest for 10 minutes before carving at room temperature."

How I do my Prime Rib

Many recipes and procedures work equally well in making the perfect roast. This is how I do mine and it works wonders for me.

I do my prime rib two ways. The first is what I call a classic roast: Start with an 8-kilo slab of bone-in prime rib. If you ask me this is the best way to enjoy the flavor of good meat. I like it best rubbed with just coarse sea salt (1½ tbsp), preferably *fleur de sel* (Cyprus salt works wonders, too), freshly cracked pepper—black and green (1 tbsp each or 2 tbsp black), and 1½ tbsp mustard powder (aids in giving you perfectly golden crust). Rub directly on to the meat surface.

For those who like garlic and herbs, I would brush an 8-k slab with 3 tbsp of olive oil and rub ½ cup of garlic paste, 1½ tbsp coarse sea salt, 2 tbsp freshly cracked pepper corn, 1½ tbsp mustard powder, 4 tbsp of fresh mixed minced herbs (rosemary, basil, oregano, parsley, thyme) or 2 tsp mixed dried herbs, on to the meat surface.

I would roast my meat covered with foil on a pre-heated 350°F oven and decide cooking time by computing 22 minutes per pound. After ¾ of the cooking time has elapsed, I would remove the foil and continue to roast until my meat surface is golden.

Then I take the beef out and let it rest before carving. I would rather undercook my meat, for once it is overdone, there is no reversing the process. Besides, there is always a pan to have your beef well done. But why would you want to do it?

Pour fat from roasting pan. Return pan over medium heat. Add 2-3 cups beef stock or demi-glace and 1½ cups of good cabernet or merlot, pouring the liquid in a stream while scraping the bits on the bottom of the pan.

Bring to a boil and simmer until slightly thickened and reduced. Season to taste with salt and pepper. If you want more sauce, add about two more cups of stock and thicken with a mixture of 1 tbsp each of butter and flour (mashed with a fork to make a paste). Use a little at a time, whisking sauce until desired consistency is achieved.

Carve beef. Serve sauce separately.

For prime rib, call Santis's, 8403771-82; PTC, 2568831-38/2564430. Fancy salts, Claudine at 0917-8958191

E-mail the author at raspiras@inquirer.com.ph

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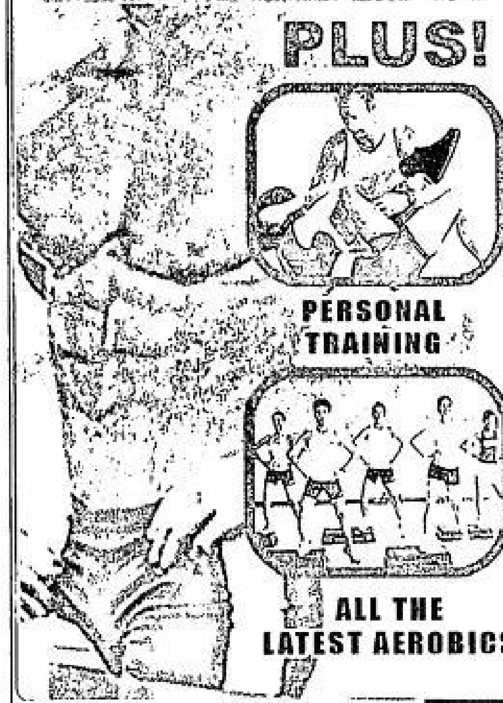

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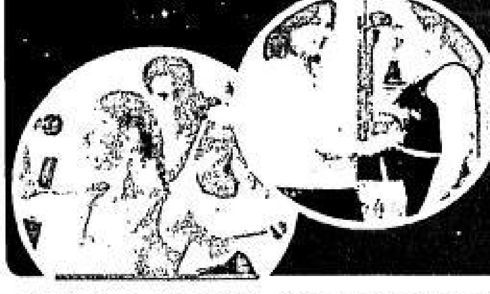

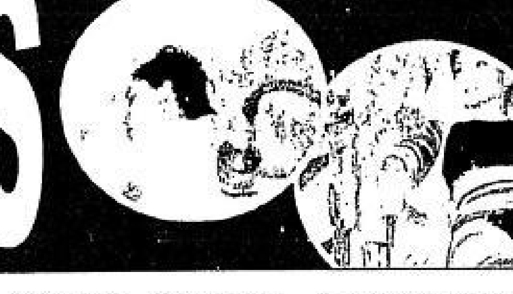

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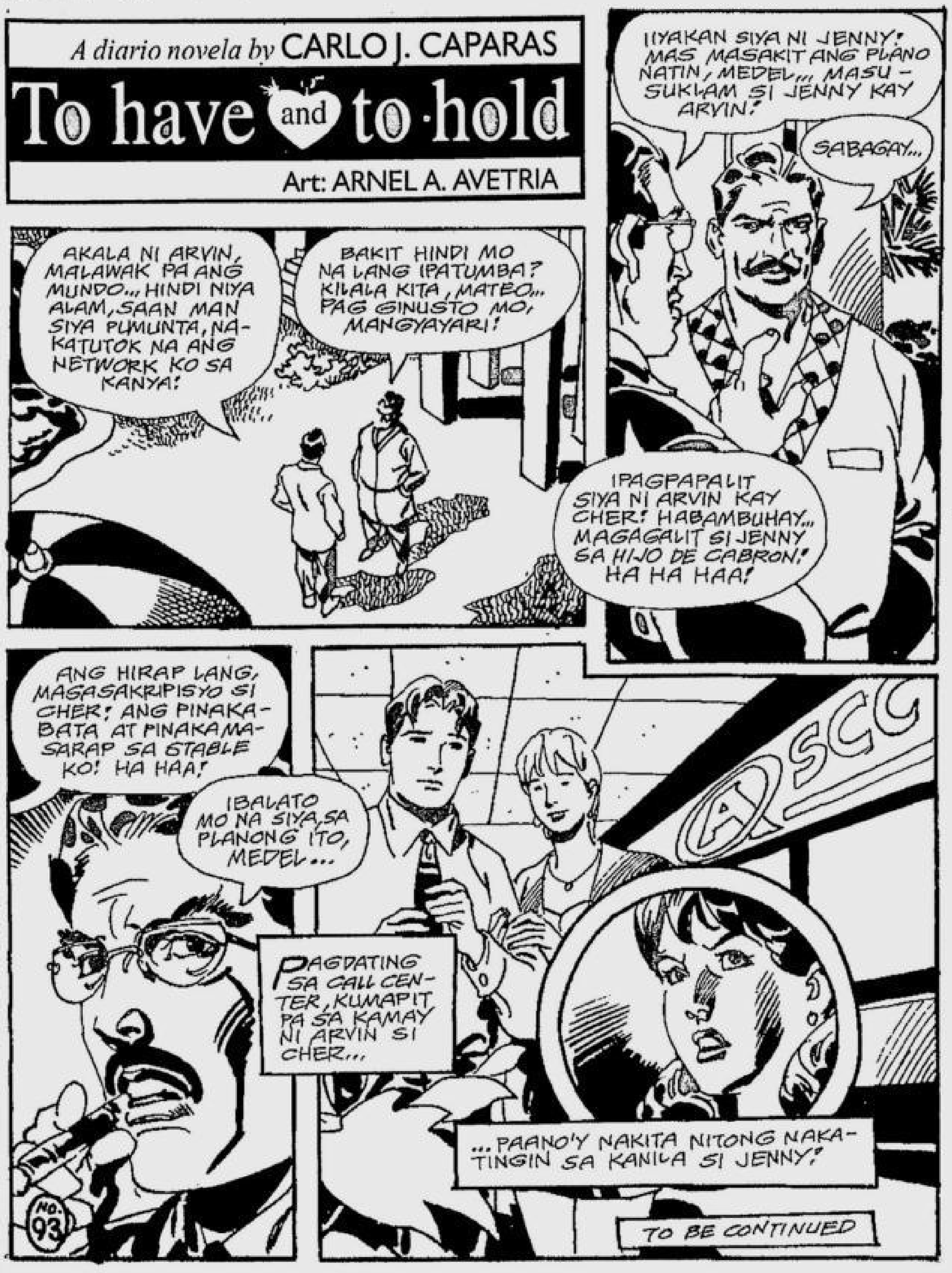
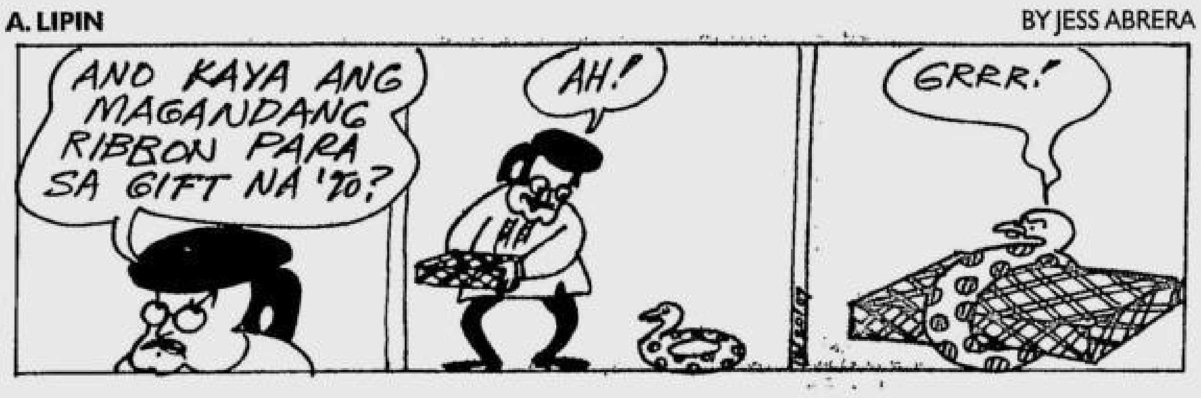
A diario novela by CARLO J. CAPARAS

To have and to hold

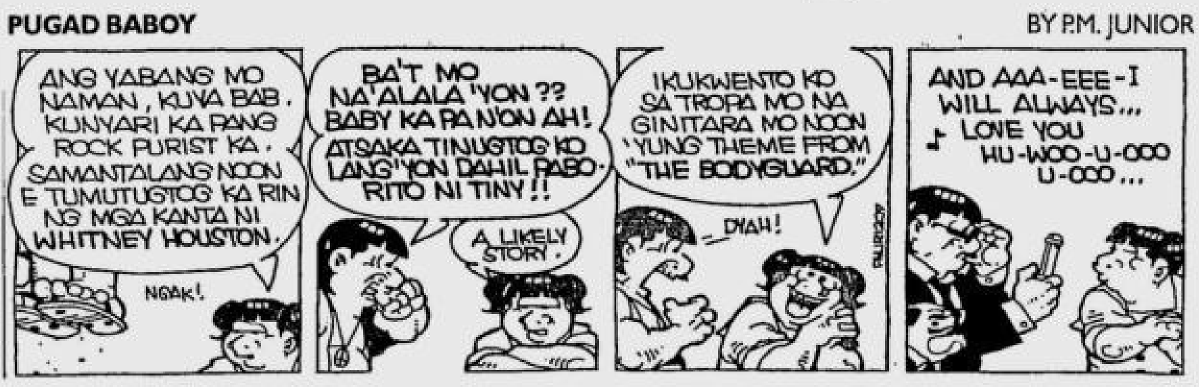
Art: ARNEL A. AVETRIA


IIYAKAN SIYA NI JENNY! MAS MASAKIT ANG PLANO NATIN, MEDEL... MASU-SUKLAM SI JENNY KAY ARVIN!
SABAGAY...
AKALA NI ARVIN, MALAWAK PA ANG MUNDO... HINDI NIYA ALAM, SAAN MAN SIYA PUMUNTA, NAKATUTOK NA ANG NETWORK KO SA KANYA!
BAKIT HINDI MO NA LANG IPATUMBA? KILALA KITA, MATEO... PAG GINUSTO MO, MANGYAYARI!
IPAGPAPALIT SIYA NI ARVIN KAY CHER! HABAMBUHAY... MAGAGALIT SI JENNY SA HIJO DE CABRON! HA HA HAA!
ANG HIRAP LANG, MAGASAKRIPISYO SI CHER! ANG PINAKA-BATA AT PINAKAMASARAP SA STABLE KO! HA HAA!
IBALATO MO NA SIYA SA PLANONG ITO, MEDEL...
PAGDATING SA CALL CENTER, KUMAPIT PA SA KAMAY NI ARVIN SI CHER...
...PAANO'Y NAKITA NITONG NAKATINGIN SA KANILA SI JENNY!
NO. 93
TO BE CONTINUED

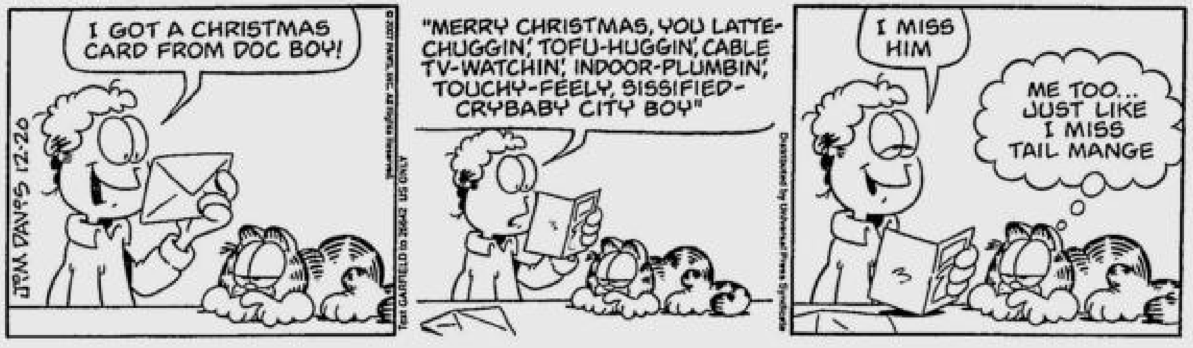
A. LIPIN BY JESS ABRERA


ANO KAYA ANG MAGANDANG RIBBON PARA SA GIFT NA 'TO?
AH!
GRRR!

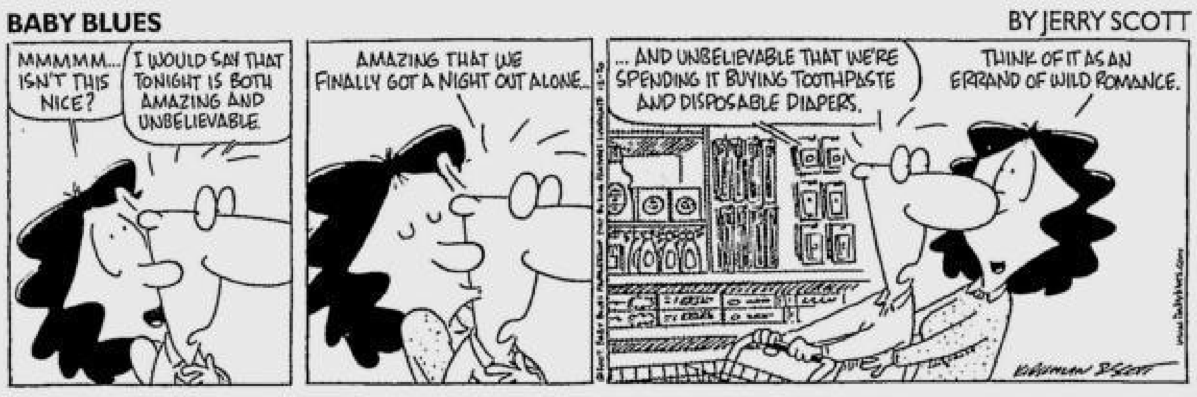
PUGAD BABOY BY P.M. JUNIOR


ANG YABANG MO NAMAN, KUYA BAB. KUNYARI KA PANG ROCK PURIST KA. SAMANTALANG NOON E TUMUTUGTOG KA RIN NG MGA KANTA NI WHITNEY HOUSTON.
NGAK!
BA'T MO NA'ALALA 'YON ?? BABY KA PA N'ON AH! ATSAKA TINUGTOG KO LANG 'YON DAHIL PABORITO NI TINY!!
A LIKELY STORY.
IKUKWENTO KO SA TROPA MO NA GINITARA MO NOON 'YUNG THEME FROM "THE BODYGUARD."
DYAH!
AND AAA-EEE-I WILL ALWAYS... LOVE YOU HU-WOO-U-OOO U-OOO...

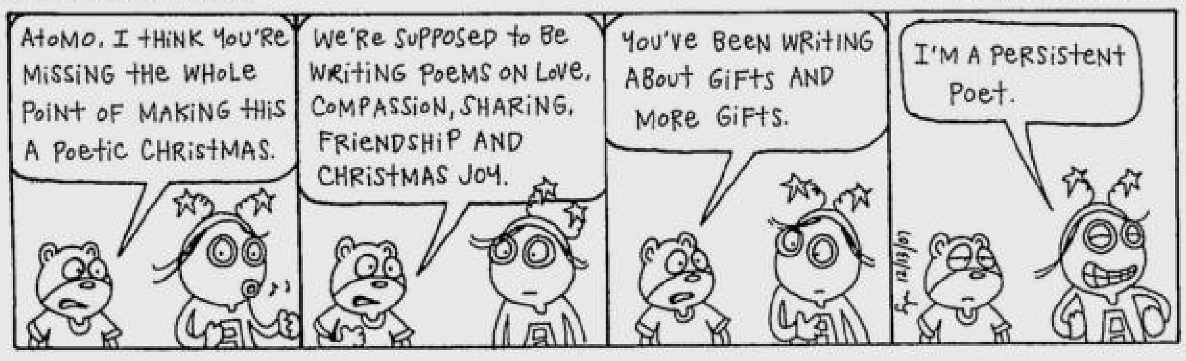
GARFIELD BY JIM DAVIS


I GOT A CHRISTMAS CARD FROM DOC BOY!
JIM DAVIS 12-20
"MERRY CHRISTMAS, YOU LATTE-CHUGGIN', TOFU-HUGGIN', CABLE TV-WATCHIN', INDOOR-PLUMBIN', TOUCHY-FEELY, SISSIFIED-CRYBABY CITY BOY"
I MISS HIM
ME TOO... JUST LIKE I MISS TAIL MANGE

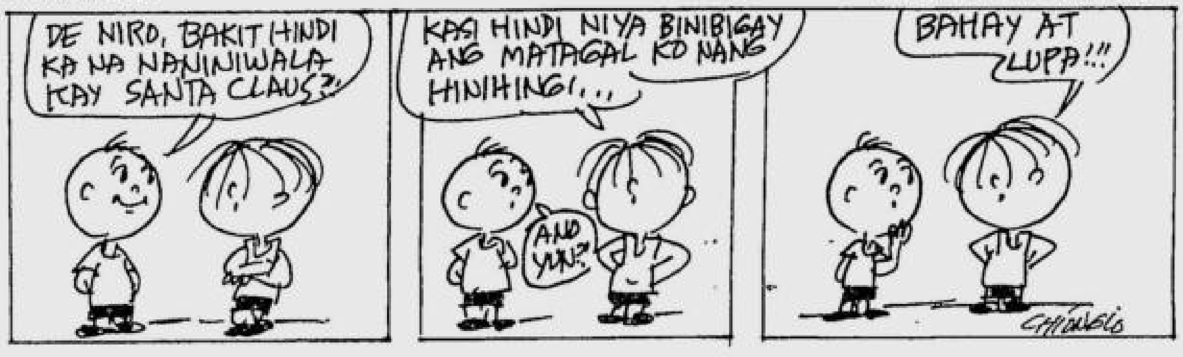
BABY BLUES BY JERRY SCOTT


MMMMM... ISN'T THIS NICE?
I WOULD SAY THAT TONIGHT IS BOTH AMAZING AND UNBELIEVABLE.
AMAZING THAT WE FINALLY GOT A NIGHT OUT ALONE...
...AND UNBELIEVABLE THAT WE'RE SPENDING IT BUYING TOOTHPASTE AND DISPOSABLE DIAPERS.
THINK OF IT AS AN ERRAND OF WILD ROMANCE.
KIRKMAN SCOTT

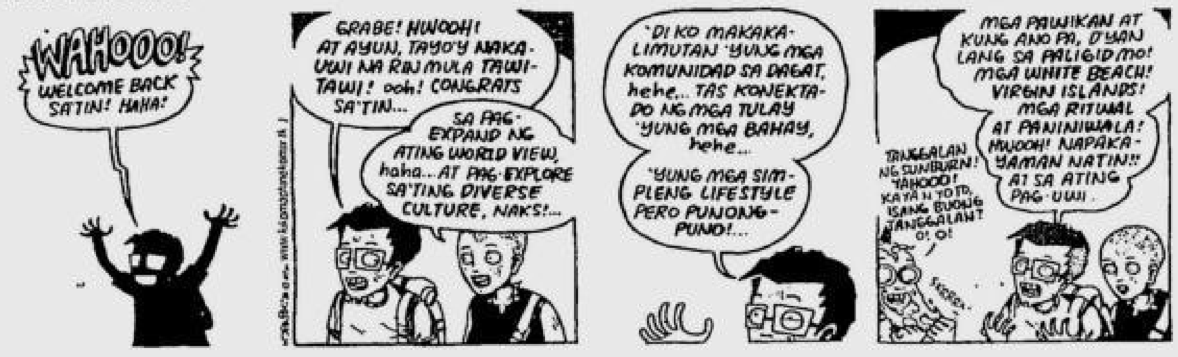
ATOMO AND WEBOY BY LYRA GARCELLANO


Atomo, I think you're missing the whole point of making this a poetic Christmas.
We're supposed to be writing poems on love, compassion, sharing, friendship and Christmas joy.
You've been writing about gifts and more gifts.
I'm a persistent poet.

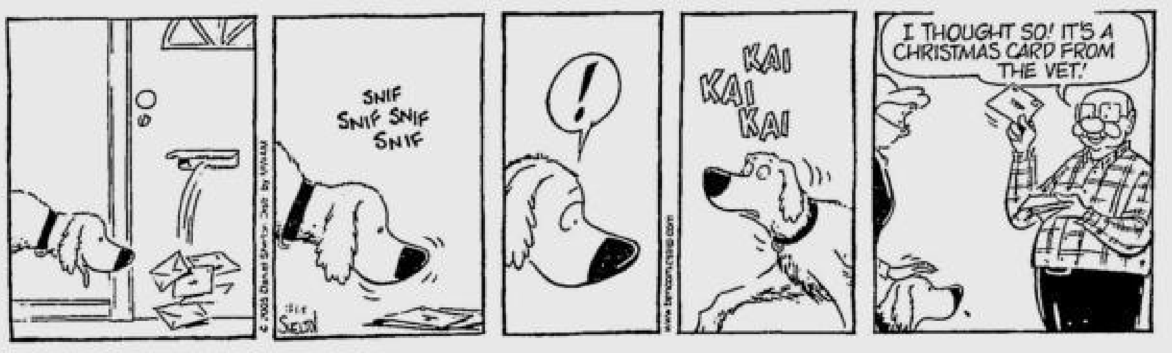
LOVEKNOTS BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


DE NIRO, BAKIT HINDI KA NA NANINIWALA KAY SANTA CLAUS?
KASI HINDI NIYA BINIBIGAY ANG MATAGAL KO NANG HINIHINGI...
AND YUN?
BAHAY AT LUPA!!!
CHIONGLO

KIKO MACHINE BY MANIX ABRERA


WAHOOO! WELCOME BACK SATIN! HAHA!
GRABE! HWOOH! AT AYUN, TAYO'Y NAKAUWI NA RIN MULA TAWI-TAWI! ooh! CONGRATS SA'TIN...
SA PAG-EXPAND NG ATING WORLD VIEW, haha... AT PAG-EXPLORE SA'TING DIVERSE CULTURE, NAKS!...
'DI KO MAKAKALIMUTAN 'YUNG MGA KOMUNIDAD SA DAGAT, hehe... TAS KONEKTADO NG MGA TULAY 'YUNG MGA BAHAY, hehe...
'YUNG MGA SIMPLENG LIFESTYLE PERO PUNONG-PUNO!...
MGA PAWIKAN AT KUNG ANO PA, D'YAN LANG SA PALIGID MO! MGA WHITE BEACH! VIRGIN ISLANDS! MGA RITWAL AT PANINIWALA! HWOOH! NAPAKA-YAMAN NATIN!! AT SA ATING PAG-UWI...
TANGGALAN NG SUNBURN! YAHOOO! KAYA N'YO 'TO, ISANG BUONG TANGGALAN! O! O!

BEN BY DANIEL SHELTON


SNIF SNIF SNIF SNIF
!
KAI KAI KAI
I THOUGHT SO! IT'S A CHRISTMAS CARD FROM THE VET.'

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 "Fame" star
5 Cotton separators
9 Death rattles
14 Pindar products
15 Huron/Ontario separator
16 U.A.E. rulers
17 Half MMMCD
18 Zola novel
19 Puts aside
20 Start of John Burroughs quip
23 "High Noon" star
24 Half of the UAR
25 Cellular letters
28 Leslie Caron role
31 Gravelly voiced speaker
33 Trolley car
37 Part 2 of quip
39 Cover in mist
41 Wilder's "__ Town"
42 Ruth's mother-in-law
43 Part 3 of quip
46 Happiness
47 "Schindler's List" star
48 Bob of the PGA
50 Go wrong
51 Pop
53 Chip dips
58 End of quip
62 Low, heavy carts
64 Otherwise
65 Clamping device
66 "La Traviata" composer
67 Nice nothing
68 Vocalist Fitzgerald
69 Twelve: pref.
70 Classify
71 Rosebud, e.g.

1	2	3	4	■	5	6	7	8	■	9	10	11	12	13
14				■	15				■	16				
17				■	18				■	19				
20				21					22				■	■
23						■	■	24			■	25	26	27
■	■	■	■	28		29	30	■	31		32			
33	34	35	36	■	37			38						
39				40	■	41			■	42				
43					44				45	■	46			
47						■	48			49	■	■	■	■
50			■	51		52	■	■	53		54	55	56	57
■	■	58	59				60	61						
62	63				■	64				■	65			
66					■	67				■	68			
69					■	70				■	71			

By Alan P. Olschwang
Huntington Beach, CA
12/20/07

DOWN
1 Kind of book or relief
2 Supplement
3 Right-hand page
4 Songwriters' org.
5 Drug option
6 Remsen and Levin
7 Santa Maria's sister ship
8 Waterproofs
9 Hold back
10 Oriental nursemaid
11 English port
12 Before, once
13 Sound of a slow leak
21 Beer buy
22 Lute's cousin
26 Medieval note
27 Jazz clarinetist Shaw
29 Thug
30 Greenland Eskimo
32 Lone man
33 Steak cut
34 Pass on (to)
35 Subsequently
36 Scale for minerals
38 Exult blatantly
40 Like Fuller's dome
44 Son of Judah
45 Newly conceived
49 Ming of the NBA
52 Colorists
54 Adulates
55 Capability
56 Bridal path?
57 Stand-in
59 Dr. Jekyll's alter ego
60 Miscellany
61 Computer operator
62 Optical storage device
63 Classic car

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

R	O	I	L	■	A	L	T	O	■	R	A	S	T	A
A	T	R	A	■	N	E	A	P	■	E	L	L	E	R
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E	R	A	S	E	■	A	R	A	M	■	S	E	V	E
D	E	G	A	S	■	L	E	N	A	■	T	R	E	E

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12/20/07

HOROSCOPE

YOU BORN TODAY: You like to begin things. You have dynamic energy and enthusiasm for life. You're impulsive, and therefore, you always multitask. You see life in broad strokes. Nevertheless, you're in touch with your psychic energy and inner powers. You work tirelessly for your goals, which is why you're so productive. The year ahead is wonderfully social and favors intimate relationships.

Birthdate of: Peter May, writer; Cory Stillman, hockey player; Dick Wolf, television producer.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): You have ambitious ideas about travel, publishing, education or even about religious and political matters. You're willing to take a risk or a chance of some kind.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): You can see the benefit of teaming up with someone else. You see how to use this person's resources so that it's a win-win situation for you both.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): This is a good day for important discussions with partners and close friends. You feel warmhearted and tolerant. You're certainly willing to listen to what others have to say.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): You're quick to grasp whatever is going on at work today. You see the big picture, which helps you understand what others are trying to do.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): You can be quite successful today if you work in sports, the entertainment world, the hospitality industry or directly with children. Things easily go your way.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): This is a good day for real estate speculation and also for family discussions. You feel generous to others, and vice versa. Entertain at home. Enjoy good times.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You can be quite successful today because you're thinking like a winner. You have a natural sense of optimism because you're in touch with the power of positive thinking.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): What a good day for business and commerce! It's also a good day to go shopping. Anything having to do with your cash flow will benefit you somehow.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): You feel optimistic, upbeat and friendly to everyone today. It's a "hey, nonny nonny" kind of day. Enjoy good times with others. When you speak today, others think you're wise.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Solitude in pleasant surroundings will please you today. You feel thoughtful in a satisfied kind of way. You're counting your blessings and glad to be alive.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Group activities, classes, conferences, meetings and conversations with friends will be successful today. You feel encouraged about your future.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Bosses, parents, teachers and VIPs are impressed with what you have to say today. You're quick to see many factors that affect a situation. Because you have the larger view of things today, you can more easily plan with foresight

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis SudoKu By Dave Green

	3	8	1					
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		7			5			3
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7				4				2
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Difficulty Level ★★★ 12/20

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HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

1	3	6	2	9	8	5	4	7
5	2	7	1	3	4	8	9	6
4	8	9	6	5	7	1	2	3
7	1	4	5	6	2	3	8	9
9	5	2	4	8	3	7	6	1
3	6	8	9	7	1	2	5	4
6	7	3	8	4	5	9	1	2
8	9	1	3	2	6	4	7	5
2	4	5	7	1	9	6	3	8

Difficulty Level ★★★ 12/19

Recipes for Yuletide feast

SAN MIGUEL PUREFOODS Culinary Center shares a few recipe ideas to make the holiday spread more festive.

For more recipes visit www.mygreatfood.com.

Christmas Stuffed Chicken

Ingredients:
1 piece Magnolia Chicken Station Boneless Whole Chicken
Stuffing:
¼ c Dari Creme Classic
¼ c Magnolia Best Fruits Jam Apple Cinnamon
1 c apples, coarsely chopped
½ c pitted prunes, coarsely chopped
½ c walnuts, coarsely chopped
¾ c white onions, chopped
½ c celery, chopped
1/3 c raisins soaked in
2 tbsp water
2 c white bread, cubed
2 tsp salt
1 tsp pepper

Combine all ingredients for stuffing in a big bowl. Mix well. Stuff boneless chicken with the prepared mixture and surround the chicken with the remaining stuffing. Tie chicken legs together and bake for 1 hour at 350°F.

Serves 10-12

Fiesta Ham Canapés

Ingredients:
½ c San Miguel Cervesa Negra
1 tbsp honey
1 pc mini baguette, sliced thinly
50 g curly lettuce
200 g Purefoods Fiesta Ham, thinly sliced
Dill Mayo:
¼ c mayonnaise
2 tbsp dill sprigs, chopped

Preheat oven 350°F.

In a bowl, combine *cervesa negra* and honey. Dip sliced baguette. Bake for 10 minutes.

In another bowl, mix together mayonnaise and dill. Refrigerate.

To assemble: Spread dill mayo on toast. Top it with lettuce and ham.

Serves 3-4

Pork Roll Roast

Ingredients:
1 pc whole, boneless, skinless Monterey Pork Liempo (about 2-3 kilos)
1 tbsp rosemary
½ tbsp thyme
3 tbsp prepared mustard
4 tbsp Magnolia Nutri-oil
1 tsp salt
1 tsp pepper
Green Peppers Gravy:
2 tbsp Magnolia Gold Butter
¼ c Purefoods Baron All-purpose Flour
1 c beef broth
2 tsp liquid seasoning
1 tbsp coarsely ground green peppers or black peppers

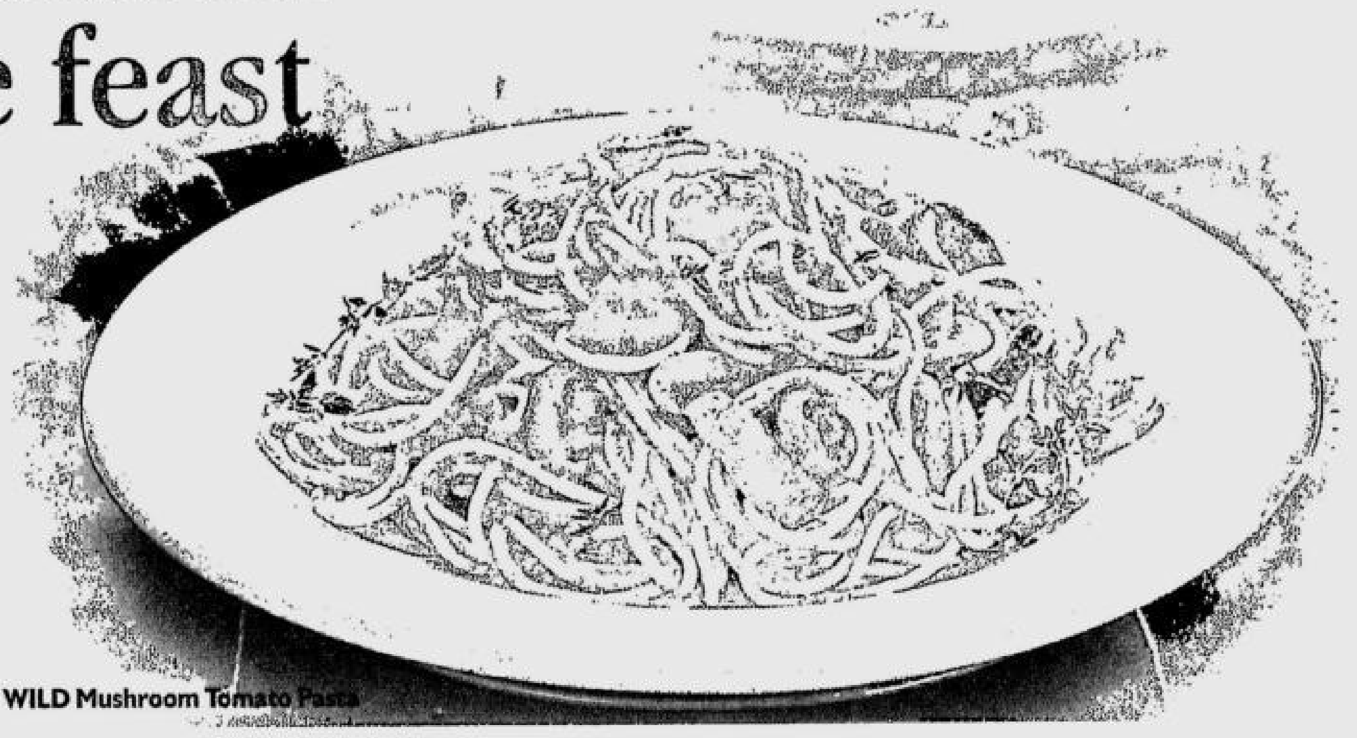
Combine rosemary, thyme, mustard and oil in a small bowl. Rub this mixture onto both sides of the *liempo*. Season both sides with salt and pepper. Roll the meat with the fat side out and secure with a string. Transfer rolled meat onto a roasting pan and cover with a piece of Glad Aluminum Foil. Bake in a 350°F oven for 1 hour then remove foil and bake again for another 30 minutes. Serve immediately.

To make green peppers gravy: In a pan, melt butter, whisk in flour, and slowly add broth. Season with liquid seasoning and add green peppers. Let simmer for 3 minutes. Makes 1 cup, serve on the side.

Serves 8-10

CHRISTMAS Stuffed Chicken

PORK Roll Roast


WILD Mushroom Tomato Pasta

Wild Mushroom Tomato Pasta

Ingredients:
400 g spaghetti
100 g Purefoods Honey-cured Bacon, chopped
¼ c onion, chopped
2 tbsp garlic, chopped
1 can button mushroom, sliced
100 g shiitake mushroom, sliced
150 g Purefoods Cooked Ham, cubed
2 can stewed tomatoes, pureed
50 g parmesan cheese

Cook pasta according to directions.

In a sauté pan, sauté bacon until almost brown. Set aside. Using the bacon oil, sauté onion and garlic. Add mushrooms. Sauté for 3 minutes. Then add ham and bacon. Add pureed tomatoes. Toss pasta with the sauce and top with parmesan cheese.

Serves 4.

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No. 1 Imported wine in the Philippines
Good Wine Good Food
with
Carlo Rossi
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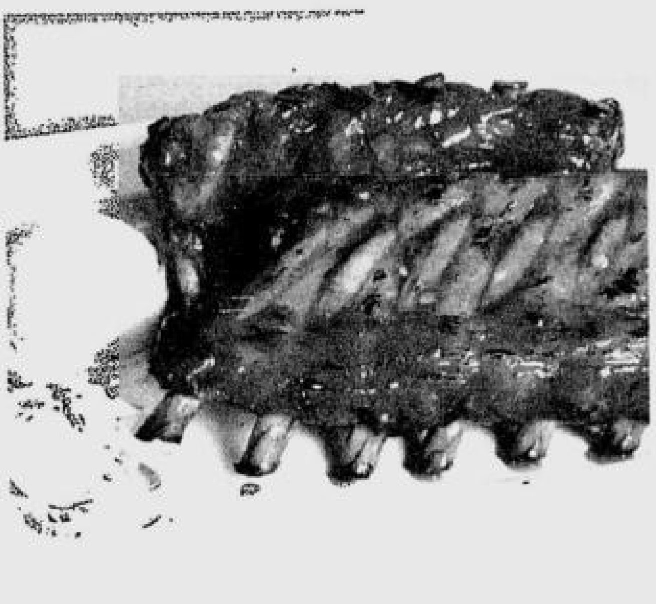
With Carlo Rossi California Red, food and wine become a pleasurable experience.

New Baby Back Ribs



PANCAKE HOUSE UNVEILS this holiday season its Baby Back Ribs, served half or full slab. It comes with Pancake House's own sauce—a choice between hickory barbecue and maple sauce. Several side dishes are available to choose from. You can select two from among mashed potato, coleslaw, potato salad, corn and carrots, rice, and French fries. Pancake House is offering other Yuletide Treats—10 food packages suitable for parties and other large gatherings. Each package has a mix of new offerings and classic favorites. Yuletide Treats are exclusively for takeout and delivery. Visit www.pancakehouse.com.ph, e-mail phi@pancakehouse.biz, call 8138720.

Holiday dessert

CAP YOUR NOCHE BUENA FEAST WITH this easy-to-do panna cotta from Enderun Colleges.

Vanilla Panna Cotta

250 ml or 1 c whipping cream
250 ml or 1 c fresh milk
75 g or 6 tbsp sugar
20 g vanilla
3 pc (or 3 tsp of gelatin powder) gelatin leaves

Mix milk and sugar in a bowl until dissolved. Put the cream in a pot and bring to a boil. Dissolve the gelatin in cold water and put in the hot cream mixture. Afterward, pour and combine the cream in the milk mixture.

Pour in desired cups or preferred mold and cool to form the creamy dessert. When ready, top with diced fruits and flavored nuts.

Enderun Colleges is at 2/F Wynsum Corporate Plaza, 22 F Ortigas Jr. Road, Ortigas Center, Pasig City; 6385555, www.enderuncolleges.com.

VANILLA Panna Cotta

High Cholesterol?
A Healthy Stomach Helps Prevent Heart Disease

C-Lium FIBRE

Christmas is usually the time when you enjoy sumptuous feasts that are high in cholesterol. However, high cholesterol level may lead to stroke or heart attack.

Greet the New Year with good health. Fight back with C-Lium Fibre!

C-Lium Fibre is made from 100% natural psyllium husk, probably the best dietary fiber in the world. It effectively binds with the cholesterol secreted in bile acids and flushes it out of your body before it is absorbed in the bloodstream. That's why a daily intake of C-Lium Fibre, together with a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol, can help you maintain a healthy heart.

Protect your heart this holiday season. Make C-Lium Fibre your daily habit!

CRx C-Lium® FIBRE

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LOVE FOR LIFE

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Canon
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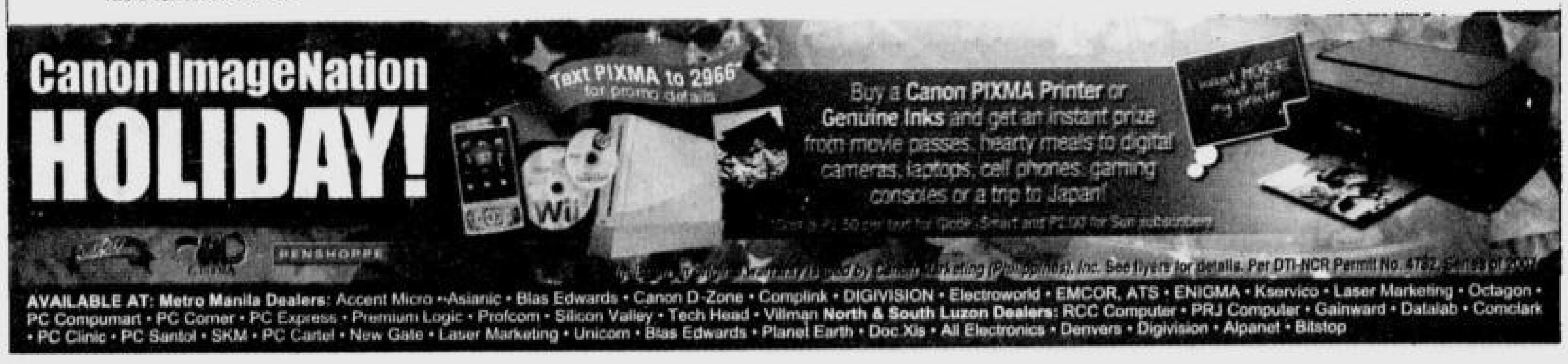

Buy a Canon PIXMA Printer or Genuine Inks and get an instant prize from movie passes, hearty meals to digital cameras, laptops, cell phones, gaming consoles or a trip to Japan!

See flyers for details. Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 4782, Series of 2007

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C ADD **P6,500** and get a **SANYO 0.5HP Air Conditioner** (SA-56P)

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- Elegant Double Ender Design
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SAVE P700

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- Elegant Double Ender Design
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- Twin Speaker

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- Nano-Ferrite System
- UV-LED & Platinum Beam Deodorizer
- Wide Multi Air Flow

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NO FROST
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- Carbon Deodorizer

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2-DOOR DIRECT COOL
- New Press-Designed Door
- New Grip Handle
- Cycle Defrost
- Electro Galvanized Steel

FREE SANYO Rice Cooker

P15,295

Note: [illegible] SR-D[illegible] & [illegible] D4[illegible] models

SR-S52MW 5.0 cu.ft.
1-DOOR DIRECT COOL
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- Cycle Defrost
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May TAWAD pa!

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FREE 521MB SD 2pcs AA eneloop with charger

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- Air Circulation Cycle Defrost

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- Air Circulation Cycle Defrost

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Per DTI-NCR Permit No 5009 Series of 2007

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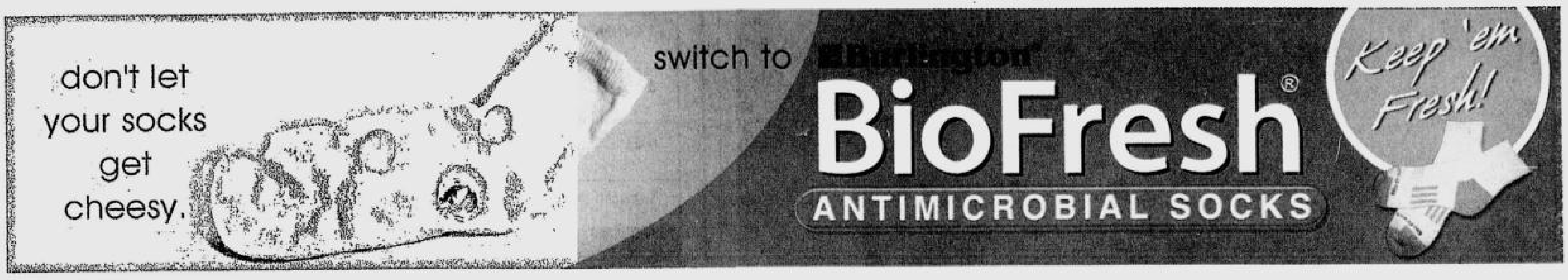
KID FIT

Santa at Starmalls

SANTA CLAUS IS COMING TO STARMALL Edsa on Dec. 22 and 25 and to Metropolis Star Alabang on Dec. 23 to meet and greet the kids and kids-at-heart. Also at Starmall Edsa all Thursdays of December, 4 p.m. is a caroling contest open to kids ages 12 and below. Groups of five may register at the Customer Service. Call 724-4992.



3 Bollywood producers set to make films in RP

By Marinel R. Cruz

AT LEAST THREE OF THE eight top Bollywood film producers who visited the country recently have committed to make movies here next year, INQUIRER Entertainment learned.

'Indo-Filipino'

The producers, who visited Manila upon the invitation of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo during a business summit in New Delhi in October, came to check on the Philippines' potential as an alternative site for making Bollywood films.

"We intend to make Indian films with Philippine flavor. We plan to get assistance from local talents—action directors, set designers and cinematographers," Huzeifa Lokdawala told members of the press during a recent gathering. "You have a very interesting film industry. It is very similar to ours. There is no reason for us not to make Indo-Filipino films."

Lokdawala is the chief operating officer of Popcorn Motion Picture PVT Ltd.

Present during the meeting were Film Development Council of the Philippines (FDCP) chair Jacky Atienza, Philippine Film Export Services Office (PFESO) chair Digna Santiago and presidential consultant for entertainment Vic del Rosario. Tourism Secretary Joseph Durano hosted the late afternoon get-together.

Maverick Productions chief operating officer Yusef Shaikh said he himself was planning to do a "song-and-dance movie."

"I want to get my musical director here," said Aditya Raj Kapoor Films head Aditya Raj Kapoor, who is considering an action-romance film. "I also plan to incorporate Filipino music in my movie and use local melody and instruments."

The meeting concluded with the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the Indian delegates and local representatives, detailing the work delineation of various groups, said Durano.

METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL 2007

(INQUIRER Entertainment is running this MMFF guide to help moviegoers plan their holiday cinema tour. The festival runs from Dec. 25 to Jan. 7, 2008.)

"Bahay Kubo: A Pinoy Mano Po"

Regal Entertainment
Stars: **Maricel Soriano, Eric Quizon, Marian Rivera, Shaina Magdayao, Mark Herras, Yasmien Kurdi, Rayver Cruz, Eugene Domingo, Bearwin Meily, Jiro Manio, Isabella de Leon, Rita Iringan, and Gloria Romero**
Directed by Joel Lamangan

Soriano plays the central character, Eden, in this dramedy about a family's journey from the trouble-free country to the crisis-filled city. Eden has chosen to take care of seven kids, six of whom she adopted. Complications arise with the family's transfer, prompting several tearful separations. "The role mirrors my real life because I have an adopted son and a biological son. I can relate to a mother's great capacity to love," Soriano said.

Holiday rush for movies

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

Film lab tries novel solution to MMFF bottleneck

THESE DAYS, THERE ARE TRAFFIC JAMS not only on the streets, but also in film laboratories that process entries to the annual Metro Manila Film Festival.

Last year, staffers of Opticolors reportedly spent Christmas Day in the film lab, finishing "Mano Po 5."

"They went home in the morning of Dec. 26," recalls Marc Ambat, general manager of Opticolors.

This year, Opticolors is processing 6.5 out of 9 competing films: "Banal," "Katas ng Saudi," "Bahay Kubo," "Shake, Rattle & Roll 9," "Enteng Kabisote 4," "Desperadas" and part of "Anak ng Kumander."

Anti-delay system

"Resiklo," "Sakal, Sakali, Saklolo" and most of the "Kumander" reels are being processed by SQ film lab.

Anticipating the bottleneck, Opticolors came up with a system designed to prevent delays.

"This year is the third film fest for Opticolors since buying some of the equipment of LVN

HOLIDAY/ E3

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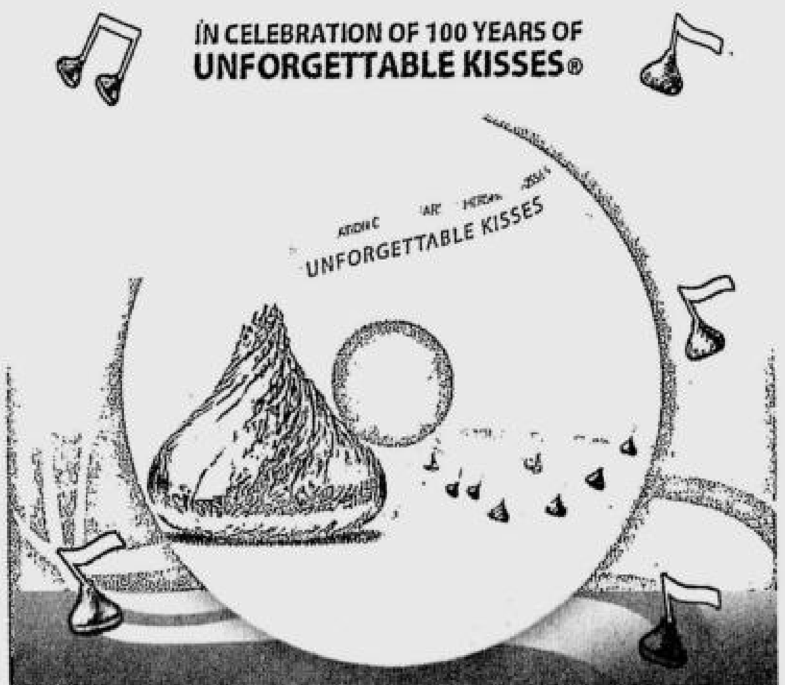

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Back to work

NEW YORK—JAY Leno and Conan O'Brien plan a Jan. 2 return to their NBC shows, ending two months of reruns brought on by the writers' strike. But until the strike is settled, the hosts are on their own.

"I'll do the best version of 'Late Night' I can under the circumstances," O'Brien said. "Of course, my show will not be as good...it may very well be terrible."

Leno said that with talks breaking down and no further negotiations scheduled, he felt it was his responsibility to get his 100 non-writing staff members back to work.

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ELIZABETH	MARTIAN CHILD	DEATH PROOF	GOLDEN COMPASS	ELIZABETH
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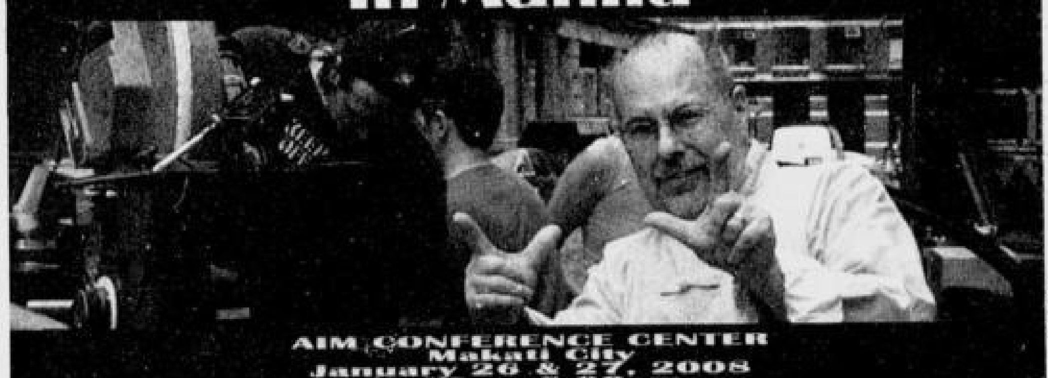

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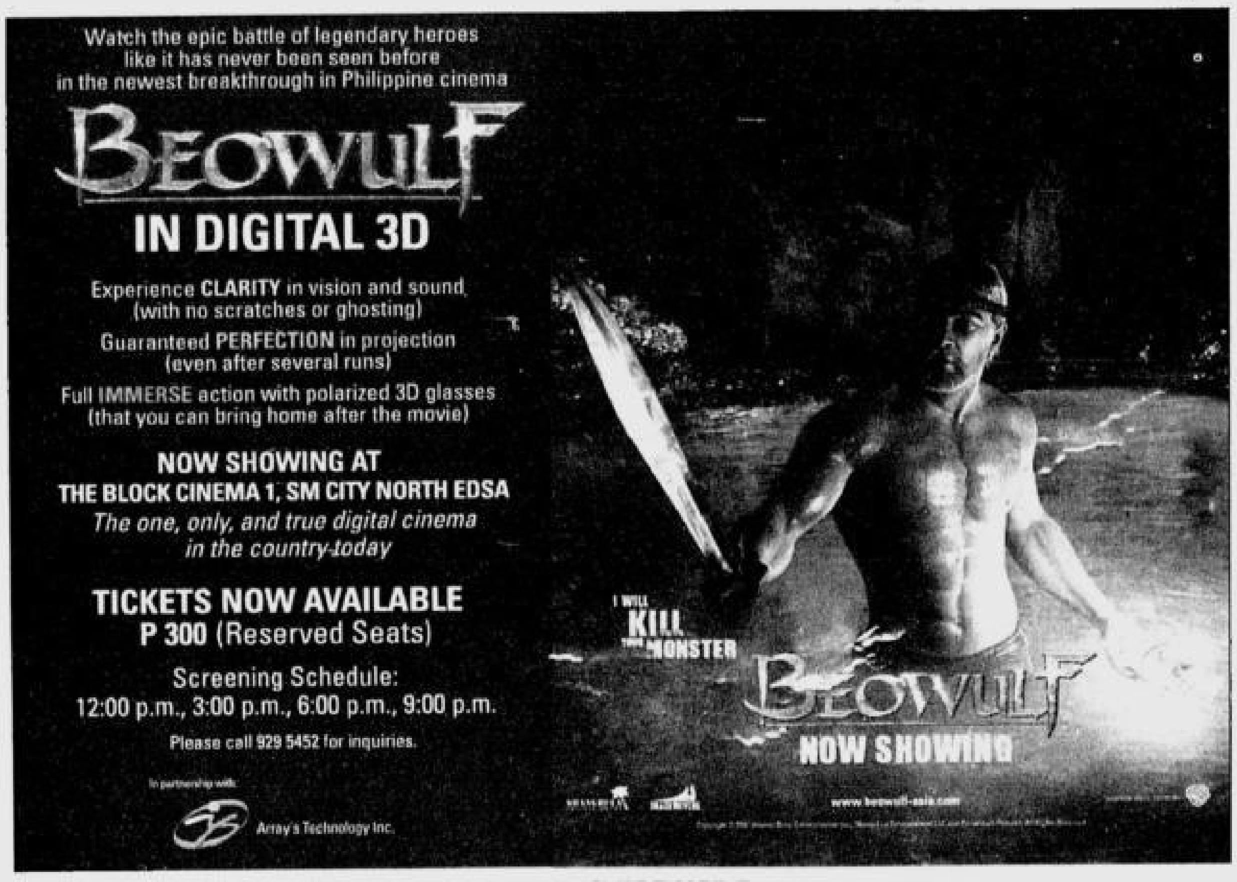

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4. BEOWULF
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6. THE KINGDOM
7. ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE
8. BATANES
9. ENCHANTED
10. DEATH PROOF
11. BLOCKBUSTER FILMFEST
12. CARTOON NETWORK/ HITMAN

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4. CARTOON NETWORK/ ENCHANTED
5. KIDDIE FESTIVAL
5. BATANES/ CATACOMBS

SM CITY SUCAT 829-4975

1. BATANES
2. HOOD OF HORROR
3. GOLDEN COMPASS
4. CATACOMBS

SM SOUTHMALL 806-6888

1. THE GOLDEN COMPASS
2. MARTIAN CHILD
3. KIDDIE FESTIVAL
4. BLOCKBUSTER FILMFEST
5. PASUKOB
6. ONE MORE CHANCE
7. BATANES
8. ELIZABETH
9. CATACOMBS/ CARTOON NETWORK

SM CITY STA. MESA 716-1416

1. GOLDEN COMPASS
2. BLOCKBUSTER FILMFEST
3. ELIZABETH
4. KIDDIE FESTIVAL
5. MARTIAN CHILD
6. ENCHANTED
7. ONE MORE CHANCE
8. CARTOON NETWORK/ PASUKOB
9. DEATH PROOF
10. BATANES

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7. ONE MORE CHANCE
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11. BATANES
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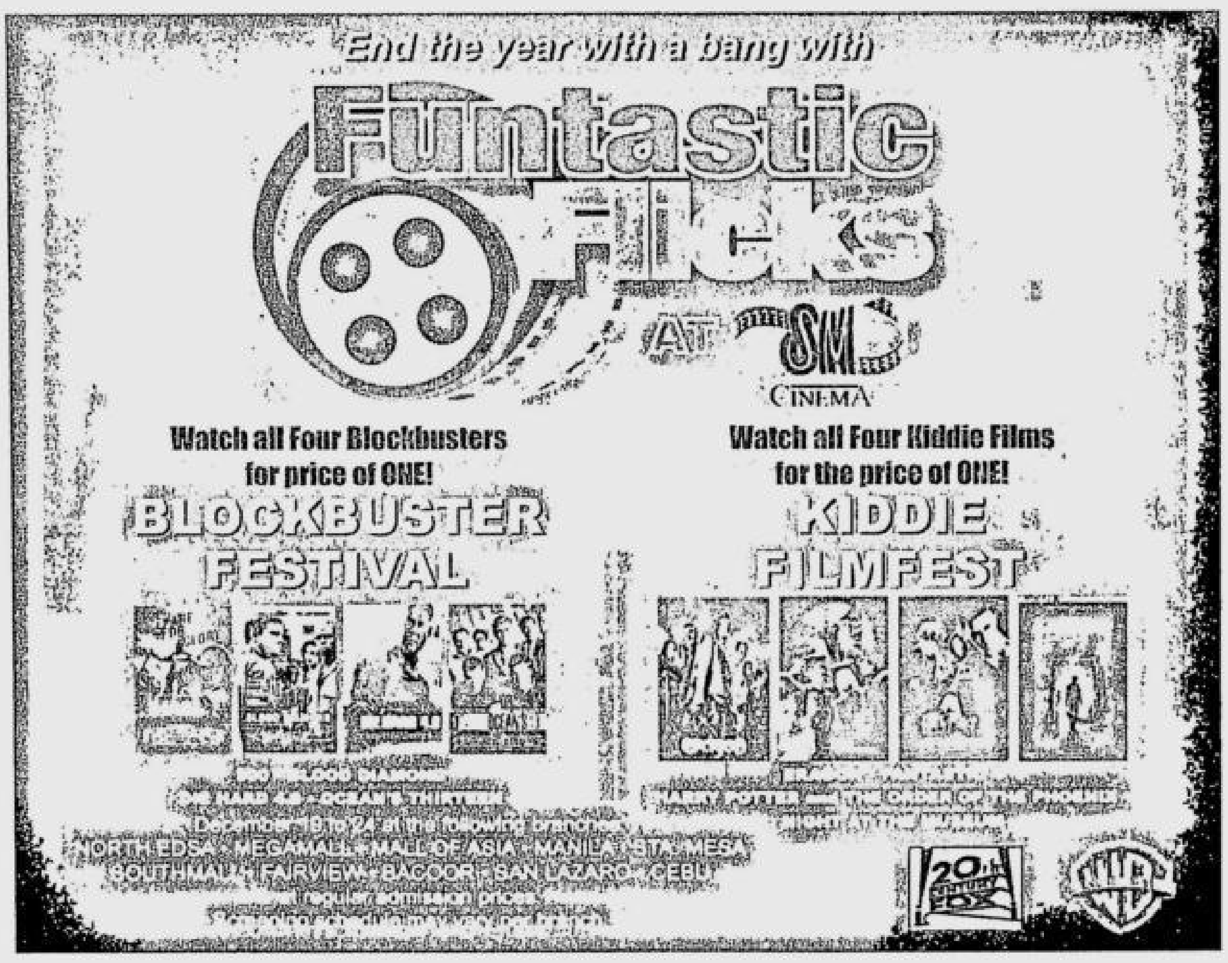
4. BATANES



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3. THE GOLDEN COMPASS
4. ONE MORE CHANCE
5. BATANES
6. PASUKOB
7. KIDDIE FESTIVAL
8. BLOCKBUSTER FILMFEST

SM CITY MARILAO (044)9332013-17

1. THE GOLDEN COMPASS
2. PASUKOB
3. BATANES
4. ENCHANTED

SM SUPERCENTER MOLINO (046)474-3160

1. BATANES
2. THE GOLDEN COMPASS
3. PASUKOB
4. HOOD OF HORROR

SM CITY DASMARINAS (046)4323201-04

1. BATANES
2. THE GAME PLAN
3. PASUKOB
4. THE GOLDEN COMPASS

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2. GOLDEN COMPASS
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1. THE KINGDOM
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3. BATANES
4. FRED CLAUSE/ HITMAN

SM CITY PAMPANGA (045)9637681-85

1. THE GOLDEN COMPASS
2. RENDITION
3. EL CANTANTE
4. THE KINGDOM
5. BATANES
6. CARTOON NETWORK/ PASUKOB

SM CITY STA. ROSA (049)5340811

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2. THE KINGDOM
3. HITMAN
4. GOLDEN COMPASS

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2. THE KINGDOM
3. THE GAMEPLAN
4. EL CANTANTE
5. EASTERN PROMISES
6. CARTOON NETWORK/ PASUKOB

SM CITY BATANGAS 885-6401-04

1. BOOGEYMAN 2
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3. GOLDEN COMPASS
4. BATANES

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1. LIONS FOR LAMBS
2. FRED CLAUSE/ CARTOON NETWORK
3. THE GAMEPLAN
4. MR. WOODCOCK
5. THE KINGDOM
6. GOLDEN COMPASS

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2. FRED CLAUSE/ GOLDEN COMPASS
3. BATANES
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8. ENCHANTED

SM CITY CEBU (032)231-3876

1. RENDITION
2. KIDDIE FILMFEST
3. BLOCKBUSTER FESTIVAL
4. THE GAMEPLAN
5. CATACOMBS
6. ENCHANTED
7. CARTOON NETWORK/ UNREST
8. THE GOLDEN COMPASS

SM CITY BACOLOD (034) 708 1010

1. BOOGEYMAN 2
2. HITMAN
3. FRED CLAUSE
4. GOLDEN COMPASS

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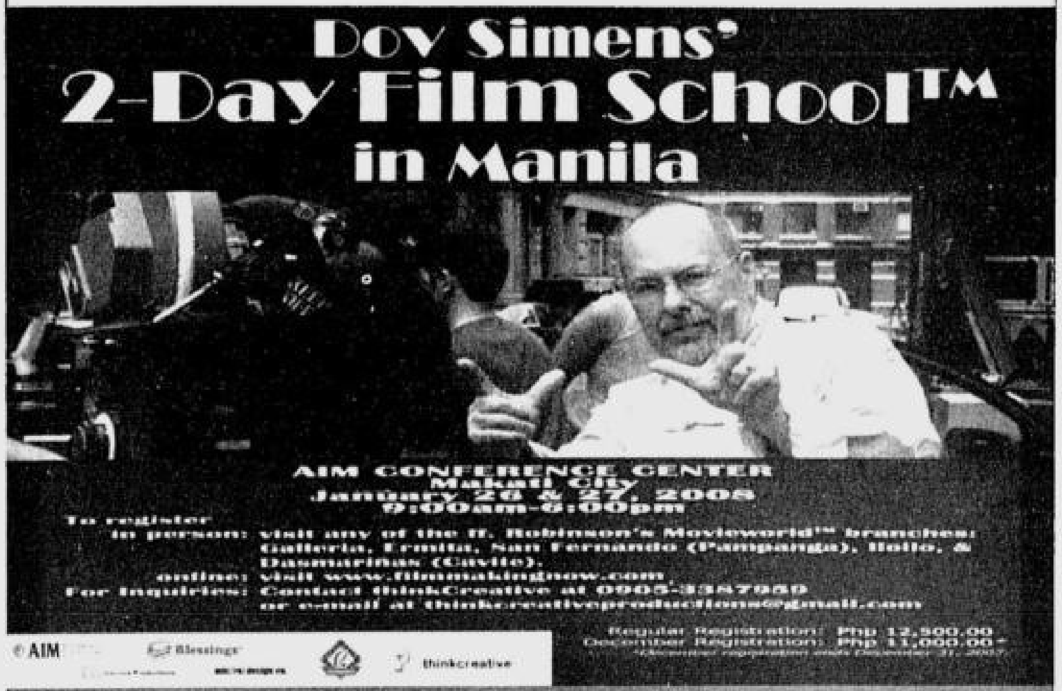
5 GAME PLAN

6 BATANES
7 BEOWULF
8 indieSine: 3 DAYS of DARKNESS
9 HITMAN
10 ENCHANTED



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3 HOOD of HORROR
4 ENCHANTED
5 BEOWULF

6 HITMAN
7 BATANES

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2 MARTIAN CHILD
3 THE GOLDEN COMPASS

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1 THE GOLDEN COMPASS
2 GRINDHOUSE: DEATH PROOF
3 MARTIAN CHILD
4 ELIZABETH: GOLDEN AGE

5 BATANES
6 BEOWULF
7 ENCHANTED
8 CATACOMBS

NOVALICHES

Ticket Price: P90/P100 935-3231 / 935-3229-30

1 THE GOLDEN COMPASS
2 PASUKOB

3 HOOD of HORROR
4 BATANES

PIONEER

[illegible]

1 THE GOLDEN COMPASS
2 MARTIAN CHILD

3 GRINDHOUSE: DEATH PROOF
4 ENCHANTED

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4 BATANES

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4 BALLS OF FURY

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2 HITMAN
3 GAME PLAN
4 EASTERN PROMISES
5 BOOGEYMAN 2
6 GREEN PROMISES

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Holiday rush. . . .

From page E1

film lab," explains Ambat. "Learning from past experiences, we established a booking system for the film fest. We offer scheduling options to producers."

Once producers agree to a certain printing schedule, they are contractually obligated to "deliver the material for processing on an agreed-upon date. If they fail to meet the deadline, they have to go back to the end of the line."

Ambat relates, "Most producers started shooting earlier this year [compared to last year]. In a meeting after last year's MMFF, we told a producer that if materials were submitted early, we could deliver the film copies early, too."

Strict sked

A bottleneck is inevitable if all the materials come in at the same time, Ambat notes. So, a strict schedule is imperative.

"The average order for a film opening on Dec. 25 is 60 copies," he relates. "For a film set on Jan. 1, the average is 40."

For "Enteng," the perennial film fest top grosser, its producer "orders at least 80 copies," he says.

Printing over 300 copies within two weeks sounds daunting, but Ambat believes that Opticolors can deliver the goods.

Faster machine

It was precisely this anticipation of the MMFF bottleneck that made Opticolors decide to import a new positive processing machine from Australia last October.

"It's faster than the old machine in LVN, which can only come out with 28 copies a day. Now, we can churn out 38 to 40 copies daily," Ambat says.

Soon, delays can become a thing of the past, he says.

Still, that is if producers submit on time.

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R-13

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CINEMA 4: ELIZABETH
11:40 , 2:25 , 5:10
7:55 , 10:35
PG-13

CINEMA 5: THE GOLDEN COMPASS
11:15 , 2:00 , 4:40
7:20 , 10:00
PG - 13

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MUSIC MUSEUM

December 28 , 2007	Pooh	8:00 PM
January 24 , 2008	Dancing with the Champions 2	8:00 PM
Feb. 8-9, 15-16 , 2008	Sitti , Rey Valera	8:00 PM
February 11 , 2008	Kyla w/ Shamrock ,Cueshe & Mojofly	8:00 PM

TEATRINO
PROMENADE GREENHILLS

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December 28 & 29 , 2007	Drag - Ons	10:00 PM

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ELIZABETH: GOLDEN AGE PG13 1:00,3:30,6:00,8:30	MARTIAN CHILD G 12:50,3:10,5:30, 7:50,10:10	THE GOLDEN COMPASS PG13 12:10,2:40,5:10, 7:40,10:10
THE KINGDOM R13 12:10,2:40,5:10, 7:40,10:10	DEATH PROOF R13 1:30,3:40,5:50,8:00	ELIZABETH THE GOLDEN AGE PG13 12:30,3:00,5:30, 8:00,10:30

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1 ENCHANTED
2:35, 5:15, 7:55, 10:35
G

2 THE GOLDEN COMPASS
2:40, 5:20, 8:00, 10:35
PG-13

3 ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE
2:40, 5:20, 8:00, 10:30
PG-13

4 THE KINGDOM
2:35, 5:15, 7:55,10:35
R-13

SHANG CINEPLEX

① ENCHANTED
MTRCB GP
1:30, 4.00, 6.30, 9:00

② GOLDEN COMPASS
MTRCB PG-13
1:30, 4:10, 6:50, 9:30

③ KINGDOM
MTRCB R-13
2.00, 4:30, 7:00, 9:30

④ FRED CLAUS
MTRCB GP 1:30, 6:30
HAIRSPRAY
MTRCB GP 4:00, 9:00

PREMIERE THEATRE
ELIZABETH (PG-13)
1.30, 4:10, 6 50, 9:30

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GLORIETTA 4	1 ENCHANTED	2 THE KINGDOM	3 THX ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE GUARANTEED SEATS	
	4 DEATH PROOF	5 GONE BABY GONE	6 THE GOLDEN COMPASS	7 MARTIAN CHILD
GREENBELT 1	1 MARTIAN CHILD	2 THE GOLDEN COMPASS		
GREENBELT 3	1 THX THE GOLDEN COMPASS GUARANTEED SEATS	2 THX ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE GUARANTEED SEATS		
	3 MARTIAN CHILD GUARANTEED SEATS	4 GONE BABY GONE GUARANTEED SEATS	5 ENCHANTED GUARANTEED SEATS	
ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 THX THE GOLDEN COMPASS	2 THE GOLDEN COMPASS		
	3 MARTIAN CHILD	4 GONE BABY GONE	5 ENCHANTED	
AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 THE GOLDEN COMPASS	2 THE GAME PLAN	3 FRED CLAUS	4 LUST CAUTION
MARKET! MARKET!	1 THE GOLDEN COMPASS	2 ENCHANTED		
	3 MARTIAN CHILD	4 ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE	5 THE KINGDOM	
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	5 ENCHANTED	6 FRED CLAUS	7 THX THE GOLDEN COMPASS GUARANTEED SEATS	

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Alabang Town Center - 842 2782; 772 1860
Ayala Center Cebu - (032) 231 5342 loc. 324
Market! Market! - 886 7519
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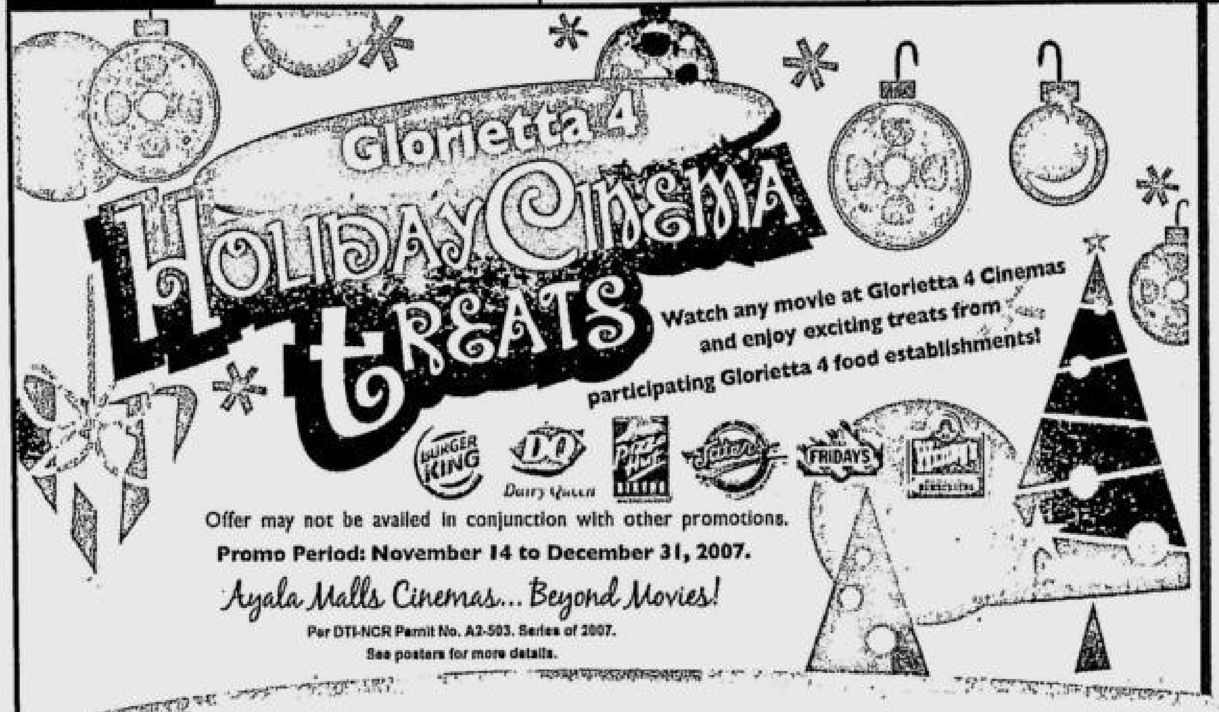
Ayala Malls

glorietta	Taylor Hicks Live! December 18; 7pm; Glorietta 4 Park
GREENBELT	Taylor Hicks Live! December 19; 7pm; Greenbelt 3 Park
ALABANG TOWN CENTER	Christian Bautista Live! December 22; 6pm; Town Plaza
AYALA CENTER CEBU	Christmas Chorale featuring Akafellas December 22; 7pm; Activity Center
MARKET! MARKET!	Japan Foundation Karate Demonstration December 18; 6pm; Activity Center
Greenbelt Onstage	Repertory Philippines presents TUESDAYS WITH MORRIE January 11 to 27, 2007 For inquiries, pls. call 887-0710 or visit www.repertory-philippines.com
Ayala MUSEUM	WATER: THE MEDIUM by Juvenal Sanso November 24 to January 13, 2008; Ground Floor Gallery For more info, pls. call 757-7117 to 21 loc. 14 or email museum_inquiry@ayalamuseum.org
TriNoma	Taylor Hicks Live! December 20; 7pm; Activity Center FREE Christmas Gift Bag for every P500 worth of purchase. See leaflets for details. Per DTI-NCR Permit No. A3-938, Series of 2007 December 1 to 31



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Iza Calzado's star also rises

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

MOST LISTS OF TOP YOUNG FEmale movie stars limit their inclusions to the likes of Judy Ann Santos, Angel Locsin, Bea Alonzo, Toni Gonzaga and Angelica Panganiban. This year, however, it's time to cite another newcomer: Iza Calzado. Iza's ticket to the big time is her lead role in the Hollywood chiller, "The Echo," opposite Jesse Bradford.

Actually, "The Echo" is the American remake of Yam Laranas' spooky "Sigaw," which impressed US festival goers so much that it has been shot again in English, for international release, again with Laranas directing.

Iza plays the female lead role in "Sigaw" and her performance was deemed so good that she was tapped to top-bill the movie's US version as well.

Her lead role in "The Echo" has given Iza enough clout to finally be taken seriously by local movie buffs. After all, "going Hollywood" is a popular pipe dream in these parts, and clinching a lead role in a US production is a rare feat for a local talent.

But "The Echo" is by no means Iza's only claim to fame. Of late, she's been starring in one Filipino movie after another, the most recent of which are "Mona," "Batanes," and the forthcoming MMFF entry, "Desperadas."

Int'l projection

Iza's best suit is her "international" projection, her dusky *mestiza* features making her a natural for Asian, Latina, ethnic and modern-woman roles.

That's a pretty wide range of possibilities, so Iza is better placed than many other local talents for a more varied range of performance offers, both here and abroad.

On point of acting, Iza has also perceptively improved through the years. Early on in her career, her performances tended to be too "obedient" (to the director) to be exciting. But her portrayal of the female lead role in the current screener, "Batanes," indicates that she's learned how to relax and trust her acting instincts.

Which is not to say that she's one of the best young actresses we have. She still has a lot to learn about going the extra mile, and making a role truly her own.

This requires a sensitive and savvy infusion of personal insight and emotional conviction that isn't all that evident yet. Still, we're impressed with Iza's improvement as a thespian, so hopes are high that she will truly come into her own next year.

As for Iza's stellar participation in "Desperadas," it may not be as apt, because she replaces Dawn Zulueta in the movie about "desperate" women (inspired by TV's "Desperate Housewives"?).

Wrong replacement

The "desperate" format would suggest that the women featured shouldn't be all that young, and in fact Dawn must be a decade older than Iza, so her younger replacement may not be all that right for her role.

But, we're prepared to wait and see, and hope that, by some marvelous feat of acting prestidigitation, Iza will render our fears moot and academic.

Still, we must point out that, as Iza is sliding into the big time, she needs to choose her follow-up roles with greater judiciousness, and with her eye on the long haul.

Once a star breaks into the winners' circle, the stakes are much higher.

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2 KIKAY
3 BATANES
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